













## CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE ESSAYS

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# Christian Conference

## Essays

EDITED BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE  
RIGHT REV. THE BISHOP OF HEREFORD

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1900

"The latitude men who studied to propagate better thoughts, to take men off from being in parties, or from narrow notions, from superstitious conceits, and fierceness about opinions."—BURNET.

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## PREFACE

THE present volume is in the main the outcome of a series of meetings arranged by the Christian Conference during the session of the Church Congress held in September 1899. The Conference itself (of which the present editor is joint-secretary) is a permanent organisation of Christians of all denominations which has existed since the year 1881. Its formation was due to the initiative of the present Dean of Ripon, the Hon. and Very Rev. W. H. Fremantle, at that time Rector of St. Mary's, Bryanston Square, and it is interesting to recall the proposals which were then accepted as expressing generally the course desired, and which have since been the rules under which the Conference has been conducted. It was agreed:—

(1) That a Conference should be formed of those who desire to promote mutual knowledge and sympathy between men of various denominations.

(2) That the Conference should be for discussion only, and that no denominational limits should be assigned to its membership.

(3) That its general object should be to enable persons of all Christian denominations to compare their views and experiences, mainly with the intention of making the life of English people generally more Christian.

Upon these lines the meetings have been held for twenty years twice a year, in June and November, when papers have been read, followed by free discussion. Care has been taken by the Committee to avoid too great a preponderance of any one denomination both in the membership of the organisation and also in the readers of papers and selected speakers. The meetings have usually been private, and whilst it has not seemed possible to form any closer union than this, it is hoped that some

nearer fellowship and co-operation have been sought by members of the Conference and promoted by its meetings. Amongst those who originally joined the Conference may be mentioned the names of Dean Stanley, the Revs. Dr. Abbott, Dr. Allon, Canon Barnett, Professor Bonney, Rev. Stopford Brooke, Professor Carpenter, Dr. Clifford, Dean Farrar, the Hon. and Very Rev. W. H. Fremantle, Dr. Thomas Gibson, Dr. Gladstone, Rev. Hugh Price Hughes, Tom Hughes, Prebendary Harry Jones, Rev. Brooke Lambert, Dr. Martincau, Dean Oakley. And selected at random from the minute-books may be found amongst those who have presided or spoken at meetings the names of Cardinal Manning, Lord Justice Fry, Professor Bryce, M.P., the present Bishop of London (Dr. Creighton), Sir John Gorst, the late Lord Coleridge, Dean Bradley, and many others.

In illustration of the variety and comprehensive character of the gatherings, some few of the subjects discussed with the names of the



speakers may be placed on record. "The practicability of united religious education" was debated in June 1884, when the chair was taken by Mr. A. J. Mundella, M.P. In the same year Sir Bartle Frere presided at a discussion on "British policy in South Africa." Two special meetings were held in 1892 on "Christianity and War, with a view to show how the Christian forces can be combined to promote a peaceful spirit, and to further plans for the abatement of war." Amongst the speakers were Archdeacon Sinclair, Lord Justice Fry, Sir Joseph Pease, Sir Alfred Lyall, Lord Coleridge, Mr. Bryce, and Professor Westlake. Representatives of other religions have also from time to time been invited to take part in the meetings, an idea which was adopted in consequence of the proposal to hold a Congress of religions at Chicago in 1893. In anticipation of that event the Conference discussed "The points of union discernible between the various religions of the East and West." Akin to this

was a discussion on "The best methods of introducing Christian civilisation amongst the weaker races," in which Lord Reay, Dean Farrar, and Sir A. Lyall took part; and upon another occasion Dr. Martineau opened a discussion upon "The duties of England as a Christian nation towards the non-Christian races." At the Jerusalem Chamber in June 1885 Cardinal Manning delivered an address on "How far can we look to legislation for the removal of social evils?" In this meeting Dean Oakley, Mr. W. S. Lilly, and the Rev. H. P. Hughes also took part. The list could be easily expanded.

It is pleasant to recall the fact that the greatest toleration and kindness have always characterised these meetings, although the burning questions of the hour have frequently been set down for discussion. In many particulars the Conference has served the purpose of a Round Table Conference. Lately a new departure has been made in holding public meetings during the week of the Church

Congress, and such meetings have been held with much success at Bradford, London, and Newcastle. It has seemed to many that the Church of England can no longer maintain that character of aloofness from other denominations which has been something too noticeable in the past, and an effort has been made from time to time to obtain so much relaxation of the Church Congress rules as shall permit of Nonconformists being allowed to speak, at any rate when questions bearing upon their own position have been under consideration. This alteration has not however as yet been made, and the Christian Conference by providing an open platform during the Congress Week has done something to remedy the defect.

This book is of the nature of a symposium, and a collection of essays is not always free from the suspicion of mere "book-making." I am not without hope, however, that the fact that the contributors are members of various religious denominations may give the present work a distinctive character. The process of

putting old faiths in a new light is largely going on before our eyes. The old formulas are, it is seen, becoming less and less suited to the needs of the present time; but none others have as yet been found to take their place. Such, however, must and will be found.

The volume has been undertaken in the belief that a restatement of religious truth on liberal lines may assist in promoting unity amongst Christians. It aims at being positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive. Of works of destructive criticism there have been a superabundance. Theology of this description does not now create the attention which it did some years back unless it be put in a particularly crude and aggressive form.

The Anglican Church is probably the freest religious communion in the world, and a man may practically preach or write what he likes and yet remain within its fold. To some this may seem an ideal state of things, whilst to others it appears deplorable. This freedom

is unquestionably due to the existence of a national Church. Whatever its disadvantages, the Establishment undoubtedly protects the parson from the hasty judgment of the man in the pew.

Whenever there has been intolerance on the part of High Churchmen or Evangelicals, or any attempt to eject one section from the Church, the national courts have pronounced on the side of toleration and redressed the balance. Pleading before the unbeliever is now seen to be quite as likely to further the wishes of the High Churchman as pleading before an archbishop. The Ritualist may deplore being bound by the fetters of the State, but it is quite certain that without its protecting arm in the past he would not now be teaching the doctrines or practising the ritual that he does. And were there to be any secession on the part of the Extremists from the Establishment, it would only be a question of some few congregations dragging out a precarious existence for a few years. There is above all things at the present time

need of toleration and charity if disruption is to be avoided.

Disestablishment may come if the people at large become imbued with the idea that the clergy generally, or a considerable section of them, inculcate practices or teach doctrines which experience has shown to be detrimental to national or family life. Legislative interference with religious convictions is to be deprecated, but it cannot be forgotten that the vagaries of a few have often proved a hindrance to many. It would have been well if Ritualists had foregone one or two of their cherished convictions rather than cause the weak brother to offend. On the other hand, the intolerance and narrowness of the Puritan section in the Church are less likely than ever to attract the sympathies of intelligent men.

Evangelicals and Tractarians have each had their turn at governing the Church. One almost wonders that the State does not elect to entrust a larger measure of power to those

who deem the Christian life of more importance than dogma or ritual. Men of such stamp exist, though they have wisely abstained from attempting to form any party. Party societies and the journals which voice their opinions have been the curse of the Church. Let us then make no fresh parties or leagues. Liberals may indicate the road which should be traversed, but it is vain to use compulsion in order to induce others to follow.

A change is, however, not unlikely. Protestants have viewed with dismay the elasticity of the Church formulas, and been astonished to find the extent to which so-called "Catholic" practices may be wedged in between the covers of the Prayer-Book. Catholics on the other hand have been disagreeably reminded by recent decisions that the Reformation after all was not without meaning. Prosecutions for heresy are rather out of date, but were another undertaken it would be interesting to see the result. Protestants and "Catholics" might then note the elasticity of Anglican formulas

manifesting itself in another direction to the mutual consternation of both.

Although the bearing of modern scientific research and biblical criticism is tolerably evident, yet this has not been always fearlessly admitted by those in authority. This reticence has been one of the chief causes of the growing disinclination of educated young men to take orders. A conscientious Oxford graduate will shrink from signing the Thirty-nine Articles when he imagines, as he probably does, that he is thereby pledging himself to very much more than any bishop demands of him.

The significance of subscription has of course been largely modified by the Act of 1865, and it is very doubtful whether even this remnant is worth preserving. A pledge to use the formularies contained in the Prayer Book, and to teach nothing in opposition to them would be sufficient. Archbishop Tillotson in a plea for comprehension urged "that instead of all former declarations and subscriptions to be made by ministers, it shall be sufficient for



them who are admitted to the exercise of their ministry in the Church of England to subscribe one general declaration and promise to this purpose, viz. 'that we do submit to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church of England as it shall be established by law, and promise to teach and preach accordingly.' " And the late Dean Milman before the Clerical Subscription Commission of 1865, expressed "his deep and deliberate conviction that such subscription is altogether unnecessary as a safeguard for the essential doctrines of Christianity." The promise to use the Liturgy is in itself an amply sufficient test.<sup>1</sup>

Some of these points are caught up and elaborated in the essays which follow.

In conclusion, I have only to add that each contributor speaks only for himself and is responsible solely for his own contribution. For the selection of subjects and writers the editor

<sup>1</sup> See an article by Rev. H. Handley, "Why Men will not be Clergymen," in the *Nineteenth Century* (Sept. 1885).

is responsible. A portion of Professor Sabatier's article has already appeared in the *Contemporary Review*, and for permission to reprint the same I am indebted to the Editor of that periodical. The translation of the same paper is based upon that kindly prepared by Mr. J. W. Probyn for the Conference held during the autumn of last year.

A. G. B. A.

*October 1900.*



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
By the Right Rev. J. PERCIVAL, D.D., Lord Bishop of Hereford.	
2. CHRISTIAN DOGMA AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	15
By Professor AUGUSTE SABATIER, Dean of the Faculty of Protestant Theology, Paris.	
3. THE POSITIVE BASIS OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE . . . . .	89
By the Hon. and Very Rev. W. H. FRE- MANTLE, D.D., Dean of Ripon.	
4. THE CHURCH AND NATIONALISM . . . . .	163
By the Rev. S. A. BARNETT, M.A., Canon of Bristol.	
5. THE FURTHER REFORMATION NEEDED . . . . .	197
By the Rev. BROOKE-HERFORD, D.D.	
6. THE RELATIONS OF THE CHURCH OF ENG- LAND WITH MODERN NONCONFORMITY . . . . .	221
By the Rev. R. E. BARTLETT, M.A., Late Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College, Oxford, Bampton Lecturer 1888.	

# AN CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE ESSAYS

	PAGE
7. PROPHETS ANCIENT AND MODERN . . . . .	251
By the Rev. BROOKE LAMBERT, M.A., Vicar of Greenwich.	
8. OUR DEBT TO MODERN BIBLICAL SCHOLAR- SHIP . . . . .	285
By the Rev. AGAR BEET, D.D.	
9. THE NEED FOR A RATIONAL CHRISTIANITY . . . . .	325
By F. REGINALD STATHAM.	
10. ON THE STUDY OF THE ATONEMENT . . . . .	361
By Rev. Professor G. HENSLOW, M.A., F.L.S., etc.	
11. CONCLUSION . . . . .	395
By the Rev. R. F. HORTON, M.A.	

# INTRODUCTION

BY THE RIGHT REV. J. PERCIVAL, D.D., LORD BISHOP OF  
HEREFORD



## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

A MEETING like this on the outskirts of the Church Congress may fairly be taken as one of the happier signs of the time we live in ; and such a gathering is, I venture to think, in some important respects of deeper significance and more full of promise for the future than any single meeting of the Congress itself.

That those who are here to-night should be willing and able thus to meet in friendly Christian conference is in itself a striking testimony to the growth of that charitable feeling which is of the essence of Christianity, and without which no real spiritual union is possible.

For the possibility of such a meeting we owe

<sup>1</sup> This paper is printed as read at the meeting of the Conference held in September 1899.



a word of grateful recognition to those good men and women of all denominations who, either in past generations or in our own day, by the spirit of their lives or by their contributions to our religious thought, or by direct personal effort, have done so much to remove the separating barriers of misunderstanding and prejudice.

In the Church of England, which I am for a moment representing before you, there may still be some persons, although they are undoubtedly a diminishing number, who feel that a Bishop should hesitate to take any part in a mixed assembly of this kind.

To reassure any of my fellow-churchmen who have this feeling, I would refer them to the Resolution of the Lambeth Conference of 1897, declaring that the time has come when efforts should be made to bring us nearer together in visible Christian unity.

Such persons would probably remind me that as a Bishop I am bound with all faithful diligence to drive away all erroneous and

strange doctrine, and I am not unmindful of the obligation.

In coming here to-night, I come in the full consciousness of my promise solemnly made. The only liberty I claim in the matter is liberty to discard the antiquated, and I trust obsolete, weapons of an exclusive or persecuting church, —weapons that belong to times of ignorance, and are very apt to recoil on the heads of those who make use of them.

Believing as I do that experience has proved the futility of the ancient ecclesiastical methods of opposing what men hold to be erroneous and of propagating the truth, and believing also that growing enlightenment has shown us the essentially unchristian character of such methods, my warfare in regard to all our differences in religion must be conducted with the only weapons I can trust for any real success. And these are the method of free and friendly discussion, and the spirit of conciliation; and I take it that in this, if in nothing else, I am at one with all those who

our Church we have the claims of those, whose forefathers were driven long ago into nonconformity, for religious equality as well as freedom, and their plea that such equality is an indispensable antecedent condition of any true unity.

Finally we have the claim, if not very loudly or persistently expressed, yet by no means to be ignored or disregarded, of those who, under the growing influence of historical criticism and scientific thought, have been led to form new conceptions of Divine and human life and their mutual relationship.

When we listen to these various claimants for recognition, we cannot but feel what a strong stream of tendency and influence it is which is carrying bodies of men so diverse all in the same direction, and stirring in them the desire for some new unity in Christ, based on some larger freedom of thought than hitherto, and on the spirit of mutual good-will

As we look into these somewhat confusing phenomena a little closer, they seem to resolve

themselves under the surface, with all its varying eddies and cross currents, into a struggle between the influence of traditional denominational dogmas, formulated at different periods and under diverse influences, and the unifying spirit of modern life and thought.

What is to be the issue of such a conflict? If the evidence of historical evolution or progress affords any sure basis for a forecast in such matters, it would seem inevitable that the latter must sooner or later prevail.

And as we think of the varied spiritual inheritance we have derived from the greater souls of every denomination, may we not thankfully rest in the hope of some better time, when the divisions that separated them will all be merged in some higher unity?

"Theological groups," says one of the greatest and most venerable of all the writers of our generation, a writer to whom thoughtful men of every Christian denomination must acknowledge their spiritual indebtedness, a writer who has a unique claim on the recog-

nition of such a meeting as this, Dr. James Martineau—"theological groups are breaking up not simply by disintegration from within, but by an unexpected play of mutual attractions. Far apart on the great circles of belief, lights have appeared which it is impossible to deny are lights of heaven. Is there a man at once intellectual and devout in any land where the English language is spoken who does not own spiritual obligations to both the Newmans? or who has not on his choicest shelf both the *Christian Year* and the *In Memoriam*? Is not Mr. Maurice revered as a deliverer by numbers of people both more and less orthodox than himself?"

Under the influence and power of such mutual attractions, Dr. Martineau goes on to urge, the flowing tide of modern feeling in favour of religious union is a tide that can never flow back again; and we cannot but acknowledge the force of his argument, when he adds that if the varying lines of thought which embrace the teachings of Simeon and

Venn, of Pusey and Keble, of Robertson and Stanley, can be followed in the Church of England without forfeiture of fellowship, they can be followed beyond ; and it is difficult to withhold our assent when he declares that to claim communion with Wilberforce and Newton, while refusing it with Chalmers and Guthrie, to own it with Law and Fletcher, while disclaiming it with Robert Hall and Elizabeth Fry, to affirm it with Patteson and deny it with Livingstone, is to deal somewhat arbitrarily with a sacred spiritual bond.

But when I turn from the reflections thus suggested, and ask myself—What then is the immediate prospect before us? I cannot venture on any categorical answer to the question.

I gladly recognise,—thus much is patent to all of us,—the growth of kindlier relationships, and freer and more frequent social intercourse, and consequently a better understanding, between different denominations of Christians,\* with more of mutual respect. I

am thankful also to see more readiness to join in common work for the public good, and of a religious character, and to widen the area of such common work.

But when I go beyond this I am confronted by two opposing theories, which must finish their warfare before we can hope for final unity:—on the one hand, the theory of a Church crystallised, unchangeable, *semper eadem*, with creed immutably formulated, a mediatorial priesthood, and specially ordained and exclusive channels of sacramental grace; and on the other hand, the theory of the Spirit of the Divine Christ working in human life in manifold ways and under many forms, —a theory which welcomes as members of the Christian Church all who acknowledge Christ as the Lord of their life, and are moved and regenerated by the power of His Spirit.

Those of us who are drawing near to the day of our departure from this earthly scene can hardly hope to see the issue of this con-

flict. As it has lately been said in another connection, we shall miss some interesting discussions; but we may go to our rest in the assured conviction that the prospect and promise of an active and beneficent religious spirit working strongly in the life of the coming century, and of a gradual growth towards some form of spiritual union in Christ, are becoming constantly clearer and brighter than any one would have ventured to predict forty years ago.

In all this I seem to see an augury of the day, how distant or how near no man would dare as yet to prophesy, when the creed of the great mass of English-speaking Christians may once more be a simpler creed than the creed of Christendom has ever been since Apostolic times; when doctrinal differences which now separate us may no longer be held an insuperable barrier to communion; when, with a keener consciousness of the Divine Fatherhood and our common brotherhood in Christ, men will be content to rely



for their spiritual union less exclusively on dogmatic definitions, and more on filial piety and that spirit of Christian charity which is the clearest intimation that has been vouchsafed to us of our share in the Divine life.

## II

# CHRISTIAN DOGMA AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

BY PROFESSOR AUGUSTE SABATIER, DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF  
PROTESTANT THEOLOGY, PARIS

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## CHRISTIAN DOGMA AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

WHAT benefit can the Christian Life obtain from that renewal of dogmatic conceptions which modern theology necessitates and brings with it? What should be our attitude towards the traditional formulas and symbols which are still in use in most of the Churches? Such is the twofold theme with which I desire to deal in the following paper.

### I

We are right in placing the interest of the Christian life, that is the supreme form of the spiritual life, in the first rank of our interests. In saying this I am not speaking in the name

of a mere vulgar and short-sighted utilitarianism. In the deepest and most complete sense the spiritual life includes and harmonises all our moral and intellectual powers. Yet we may ask, Does this beneficent action and reaction of the Christian life on scientific activity, and of this latter on the Christian life, exist? Do piety, or religion, and science conspire together mutually to strengthen one another?

When we look on the condition of the Christian world in the last days of this century, now so near its close, are we not struck by a disquieting contrast?

In the practical condition of Christian work we see an incomparable development of beneficent energy. Never has a more numerous army of Christian workmen laboured in the factories of God.

Let us beware, however, of all illusion, of all self-complacency. If we look at Christian *thought* we perceive a different spectacle and we find symptoms which are of a nature to diminish our confidence; for here reign the

greatest uncertainty and the deepest confusion. It is not that theological activity is not intense ; but it does not produce harmony, and, instead of helping practical piety, it seems to disquiet and paralyse it by sowing trouble, doubt, and confusion.

The labours and progress of scientific theology, in our time, are neither less rich nor less worthy of admiration than those accomplished, in our day, by all the other sciences ; but whilst the development of these last has marvellously furthered the general prosperity by applying to art and industry their methods which are so pure and their discoveries which are so fruitful, one cannot help asking what advantages religious life and morality have reaped from the scientific labour of theologians? Has it had any other effect than that of troubling the security of the old faith, of shaking the simple confidence of Christians in the solidity and durability of beliefs on which they were accustomed to make their spiritual life itself depend? Hence the dis-

credit thrown on the researches and the results of modern theology. Yet what advantage can we gain if, with a foregone conclusion, we ignore what we might learn, or condemn what we do not understand? Such feelings of hostility or disdain towards scientific thought are useless. They can define for us a certain external attitude, a certain ecclesiastical policy, but they cannot bring back into the conscience the security of faith or the joy of life.

But why lay the blame only on theology and theologians? This state of trouble and perplexity in Christian thought comes from more distant and general causes. What has happened in theology is only the result and effect of a mental revolution making itself felt everywhere else. The conflict which we speak of has arisen between the new culture, the scientific philosophy of our time, and the traditional forms of Christian beliefs which have been imprudently declared to be unchangeable and immovable. We live in a very different world from that of our ancestors.

Their representation of the universe makes us smile. The world which modern astronomy, geology, chemistry, biology, reveal to us offers no point of convergence or of coincidence with the religious notions of the Biblical writers or of the Fathers of the Church. These latter, therefore, float in air without any tie or relation to the realities around us. I do not say that this changed point of view of the universe touches the foundation or essence of religion, but it certainly affects the form of our beliefs. The Christian who seeks to preserve these latter intact is obliged to live a kind of double life. As a modern man he lives in the world of Newton, Laplace, and Darwin; as a traditional believer, not doubting the full verbal inspiration of his Bible, he must, when reading it, forget what he has learned and live again unconsciously in the world as it was before the discoveries of Copernicus. Or, if he suspects the opposition, he feels divided in himself, and is forced either to renounce his faith in the infallibility of Holy Scripture, or to sacrifice



his modern culture to a sacred authority. The first Christians had, for example, no difficulty in representing to themselves a bodily ascension of Jesus into heaven, because heaven was to them a real geographical region absolutely settled and determined in their minds. For the Christians of our time heaven is a spiritual idea. When this is admitted, then even those who are convinced of the bodily ascension of the Saviour, and hold to it tenaciously, cannot possibly represent it to themselves as an objective fact.

Many other examples are offered to us in the case of certain miracles of the Old and New Testaments, such as the creation of the rainbow after the Deluge, the standing still of the sun and moon at the command of Joshua, the going back of Ahaz's dial, the descent of Jesus into hell, the "catching up" of Paul into the third heaven, the creation of the world in six days, the situation of the Garden of Eden, and other like matters. No one has studied the history of dogmas without noticing how much

there is in the most important of them of old worn-out matter, of dried-up forms, which the most conservative of Christians complacently attenuate, neglect, and eliminate tacitly in their own minds, because such things find no place there. But the least instructed or the most tenacious have a vague consciousness that the position thus created is difficult and dangerous. Unable to give up their culture, unwilling to give up their faith, they endure a perpetual struggle which troubles them and prevents them from enjoying any freedom in their inner life. That is the cause of the great spiritual weakness of which one is conscious under the ardour and fever of an overflowing activity. One is carried along with a sort of violence to the performance of outward works as an escape from the uneasiness for which one knows no remedy.

The inner life of the Churches is no less affected than the conscience of the individual. In each of them, and in all countries two currents of thought are apparent, and are

frequently in sharp collision : the one that of the traditionalist, the other that of the innovator ; the one tenaciously attached to the ideas of the past, the other seeking to disengage Christianity from them and to find a new expression for it. These two currents are in keen opposition ; they create such divisions that the separation between members of different Churches often seems less than that between two different parties in the same Church. From these causes spring religious combinations which are quite new. And the new line of cleavage created by this movement of men's minds runs athwart all the old religious societies and threatens to cut them in two.

I see no exception to this universal phenomenon. If any one points to the apparent unity which a powerful discipline maintains in the Roman Catholic Church, one must examine more closely what is hidden under these official appearances, and what troubles and interior discords that silence conceals. The two currents exist in France as elsewhere, but

they flow under the surface of the soil only to break forth from time to time with extreme violence. There is a liberal Romanism, a new world or modern tendency, whatever its name, and under whatever guise it is hidden, and there is also an ultramontane Romanism, a Jesuitism which demands submission. These two spirits are irreconcilable and wage a ceaseless war against each other, agitating the Church to its depths and constantly threatening some unlooked-for schism. Up to the present an iron discipline which is in the hands of those in authority has succeeded in humiliating and harassing the action of the Liberal party; but to impose silence by repressive measures does not change convictions. How many souls in France, in Germany, in America, revolt and suffer in silence! What things does one not hear in confidence when, now and then, some of these men allow one to read what passes within them! Who can tell the doubts, the despair, the moral agony, which are hidden under the roofs of presbyteries! I am not

speaking of the unity of government, but of the unity and of the interior peace of the conscience; but I am bold to affirm that this spiritual unity is less in Roman Catholicism than elsewhere. Under this system of compression the trouble of souls only diminishes in proportion as the life of the spirit itself diminishes.

It is in thus studying the common evil from which all the modern religious world suffers that one discovers the depth of that evil. What does it matter that our Christian works are numerous if the source from which they proceed is about to dry up? What is the good of converting the negroes of Africa if in our European civilisation Christianity cannot be loyally confessed by the choicest spirits? In vain has the tree appeared in the late autumn once again laden with fruit. Do we not know the fate which awaits it as soon as the roots are dried up?

The profound evil, the modern evil which is attacking the Christian life, is the menace of

a divorce between science and conscience, between thought and action. One asks oneself if that which is good is true, and if that which is true is good? The Christian conscience seems to have lost its principle of unity. Can there be a better or more needful service rendered to it in this formidable crisis than to reassure it against its own fears, to dissipate its doubts, and to give it back its organic unity reconstituted, and therewith its peace, its confidence, and its serenity?

## II

Given the nature of the evil, it seems clear that the cause which has produced it, and which is entirely intellectual, alone can cure it. However, before coming to the true remedy, it is necessary to examine the external remedy that empirical doctors advise, and that reactionary minds undertake to apply. This remedy consists in clinging blindly to established tradition, in ignoring the evolution of

religious thought, and in maintaining order and unity in the Churches by repressive measures. It is, strictly speaking, the Romish method. Without asking ourselves how far it is applicable elsewhere, let us see what it is worth in itself.

I should go against all my convictions if I disputed the legitimate authority of tradition and the indispensable part which it has in the propagation and maintenance of religious life. When we are told that tradition is our mother, that she engenders us in the flesh and nourishes us with her milk, that the most original and creative spirits are no less her sons than the most commonplace and inert, not only have I nothing to object, but I feel I must improve on these incontestable statements, and I willingly add that without tradition there is no progress, that these terms, far from being opposed to one another as a superficial view might indicate, are in reality synonymous, that they point to the same historical phenomenon, tradition being only the continuation of progress in the past,

just as progress is only the continuation of tradition in the future. They are admirably blended in the very idea of evolution, which may be likened to a chain of which the rings might be the offspring one of another. Most Christians confess that they owe what they are to their education, to those first decisive impressions which as infants they received from a father or master, from some pious mother or venerable grandmother, who taught them on their knees to join their hands together in prayer. Who is there amongst us who does not cherish in the depths of his heart those dear memories which form the strength and benediction of his life? There is not one, in whatever direction his personal reflections may have carried him, who wishes to separate himself from the tradition and from the Church by which he enters into and remains in communion with his brothers in the present, and with his spiritual ancestors in past ages. We all believe in the communion of saints. The collective Christian soul is always richer than the individual



soul. We all begin by being catechumens, and in some respects we are such all our lives. We are not willing to uproot ourselves, or to let others uproot us from the soil in which we have been planted; we know too well that organisms which are uprooted, if they are not without virtue, at least are without offspring.

But if the authority of tradition is proved to be necessary and legitimate, it must certainly be allowed that it cannot be absolute. All tradition is human and subject to historical conditions. Not one is absolutely pure. From the past we receive all the evil as well as all the good, the truth and also the error. Tradition, while it is the teacher of the human race, necessarily participates both in the grandeur and in the degradation of humanity. Besides, all teaching has its limit in its very existence. The only mission to which it can lay claim is to make of the child a man, to conduct men from their Christian childhood to their majority. What is the majority of a mind unless it be the character of a moral being in whom is

formed little by little an interior principle of reason, the right to judge things by himself, a rule of life ever more and more identified with his own conscience? Having within himself an active individual energy, no man can stop exactly at the point where what is called the chance of birth has placed him. It is clear that he must always criticise the inheritance he has received from his forefathers, and add something to it by his own individual labour.

It is not otherwise with Christian tradition. Its action as a teacher has no other object but to conduct the Christian from his infancy to his majority. This view was dear to the Apostle Paul; he declares to the Corinthian Christians that they are still infants, and exhorts them to become men: elsewhere he urges his readers to attain to the perfect stature of Christ Himself by developing in themselves through the Holy Spirit the living consciousness that they are also "the sons of God," and as such are free from all anterior yokes and authority. Active, personal, inspired piety thus becomes

to the Christian not only the principle of spiritual liberty, but also the principle of criticism in reference to the tradition he has inherited. It teaches him both to venerate and to love this inheritance, and at the same time conscientiously to examine its contents. He then understands that tradition belongs to him, and that he ought to profit by it; but he does not so belong to tradition as to become its slave.

Political or ecclesiastical reactions do not burden themselves with lengthy arguments. They count for their triumph on weapons which they deem surer, on the official privileges which they gain for men, or on the judicial pains and penalties which they inflict. In one case they will pronounce anathemas which exclude the heretic from the communion of the faithful; in another they will procure condemnation on doctrinal grounds, followed by sentences determined by a majority of votes. But all this is of no avail in the eyes of men who think and judge, and, what is more, has

little effect in the present day. The attempt to restrain by such methods the choicest Christian spirits under the yoke of a tradition which cannot be justified except by force, has no other effect than to secure its condemnation before the Court of Appeal by which, in the last resort, everything has to be judged in our day. It is the most childish and empty of anachronisms. In order to live by such expedients, the Roman Catholic Church is led to break with all scientific culture, to proclaim the blessing of ignorance, to condemn freedom of thought and study, to endeavour to put the human mind in tutelage, and to keep it everlastingly deprived of the rights of manhood. And what does such a church gain but an ever-increasing isolation amidst the burning activity of the modern world, and the disdainful indifference in which all thoughtful minds entrench themselves in view of its teachings and its ceremonies? The river does not cease to flow. Behind these artificial dykes erected by man to stay the current, the waters con-

tinue to accumulate higher and more pressing until the day when the breach is made, and the dyke and the edifice built upon it are carried away together. There is then no longer a crisis but a revolution.

The salvation of the modern Christian conscience cannot be found in the policy of ecclesiastical repression. In fact the theologians of tradition do not count very seriously on the effectiveness of such a remedy. They will doubtless protest and will reply that their tenacious attachment to traditional formulas proceeds from a strong internal conviction, and that they have weighed and examined everything and have found the truth in them alone. Very good! But does not that mean that they are attached to these formulas not so much because they are ancient but because they are true? Thus these men recognise and practise for themselves that right to examine which is the very right which we claim. But they must know well that in thus acting and speaking they have already abandoned the ground of authority

pure and simple. They no longer make truth depend on tradition, but the authority of tradition on truth. When this is admitted, discussion becomes possible and fruitful both for them and for us. We can all then place ourselves loyally and fraternally in the same school, with the firm resolution to let ourselves be taught by the truth. That there is truth, a profound moral and religious truth, in the tradition of past centuries we admit without difficulty, since it is Christian tradition; but that *all* in it is not truth they on their part must acknowledge because it is a human tradition—that is to say, mixed, varying, and incomplete. Hence criticism is both necessary and legitimate and also is capable of being eminently beneficial. That is what we shall seek to prove in the remainder of this essay.

### III

When our descendants seek to characterise this nineteenth century, in the last years of which we are living, and to express in a single

word its special spirit, they will call it "the century of history." Its first years were illuminated by awakening in the human soul a new sense, I mean the gift not only of seeing but of resuscitating in imagination the mental (or spiritual) life of bygone ages. That which was begun by Walter Scott in England, by Herder in Germany, by Chateaubriand in France, as a kind of brilliant poetry, transformed itself finally into a scientific mode of thought which forced itself upon all branches of human culture under the title of the historic method.

This may have its excesses; there may be some narrowness or even some idleness of spirit in the habit we have formed of looking at things only in the transient stage of growth. Our children will, no doubt, bring back metaphysics, the eternal questions of which are not suppressed because they are set aside. But whatever correction the coming century may bring to the philosophical inheritance that our own leaves to it, it will none the less reap as

a definite acquisition, as an incomparable means of investigation and study, the historical method and its rigorous application to all the problems of human life and of the universe. All the sciences have been transformed during the century by adopting more and more the historic form. Astronomy recounts the history of the heavens, geology that of our planet ; chemistry and physical science tell of matter and its transformations, biology writes the history of life in all its degrees and forms. Thus is made, from the historical standpoint, a new synthesis of all knowledge. Our different sciences have become the chapters of an immense history of which human genius is the author and of which the universe is the hero.

Theology cannot escape from this movement ; it has drifted little by little into the form of a history of religion. It looks upon Christianity as a great historical phenomenon of which it is constrained to explain the origin and the evolution. From the action of this new spirit and of this method two branches of theological



study have latterly taken an extraordinary step in advance and have exercised a decisive influence over traditional dogmatism. I refer to the historical criticism of the Bible and of its strictly historical interpretation on one side, and on the other to the historical criticism of dogmas. The first has had the inevitable effect of modifying the dogmatic idea which our fathers had of the Bible and of its authority, that is, the very dogma which in the old theology served as the foundation and guarantee of all the others. The second has modified the notion of dogma in general, by showing us its dependence on historic conditions, and its constant and inevitable transformation.

Thus the entire edifice of traditional dogmatic conceptions, if it is not to perish, seems condemned to be transformed from its foundation to its summit. I desire to show that this necessary transformation is not only possible, but is also very advantageous to piety.

Let us begin with that which concerns the Bible. First comes the question of the canon

of the Bible. You are aware that it has never been solved by the ancient theology in a satisfactory manner. When the Bible was represented as an inspired book of which God was the first and principal author, as a book really divine both in form and substance, it seemed that there could be no difficulty or doubt in delimiting the frontiers of such a collection of books, and so separating the books dictated miraculously by the Spirit of God from those naturally issuing forth from human thought. The contrary is the fact. A flagrant incompatibility, an impossible contradiction, exists between the ancient theory of inspiration, which was so immovable, and the definition of the biblical collection which was so uncertain and insecure. The question of the canonicity or the non-canonicity of the so-called Apocryphal writings of the Old Testament has never been dogmatically decided. Whilst they are admitted into certain Bibles, they are rigorously excluded from others. The first edition of Luther's Bible represented as extra-canonical in

the New Testament the Epistle of James, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of Jude, and the Apocalypse of St. John. Since that time this distinction has disappeared. Why? No one has ever been able to say why. If we consult history, this question of the biblical canon—a real cross for the piety of our fathers—has only for us a relative importance and has made itself clear in a very simple way. The miracle of a library made by God Himself having vanished, the collection of the books of the Old Testament has been revealed in its true character as the work of the Rabbis or of the Synagogue, and that of the New Testament as the work of the Church of the first centuries. Rabbis and fathers of the Church thus employed themselves for centuries with the resources at their command, but also with their prejudices, ignorance, and credulity. The collections were made by degrees, by successive groupings of the books, with hesitations, with endless controversies; and if they do not seem defined to-day, it is because they never really were nor

could be. To be convinced how much hesitation and uncertainty existed, at any rate on the surface, it suffices to have read the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome. Doctors dispute, hesitate, make cleverly graduated classifications; councils contradict each other; manuscripts differ; the greatest diversity reigns in the old Bibles. It was a scandal to the theory of the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture; but is not this an intolerable yoke, an obstacle to piety? and would not the modern Christian be more happy if he found himself in the presence of historical documents faithfully collected and preserved, which should bring him the lofty and fresh religious inspirations of the first generation of Christians, and give him at the same time a sure means, an incontestable standard, by which to separate the essence of the Gospel from all later traditions or additions, and also from all alterations which may yet supervene? After all, is it not thus, from the

historical point of view, that each one of us resolves the question of the canon and upholds the normal authority of the Bible in matters of faith?

If from the exterior and the form of Holy Scripture we pass to its contents, and to the actual books of which it is composed, the revolution which has come over our conceptions will appear still more serious. I do not speak here of the special results of criticism or exegesis; I speak generally of the new light in which history exhibits those books in their relation one to another, and their strict dependence upon the changing circumstances and the special causes which gave them birth. We have no longer before us a collection of divine oracles, a supernatural code of doctrines, but a series of historical documents serving as landmarks of a religious evolution of which they are both the product and the witness. The sacred germ which had been united by the Church in an artificial tie has released itself, and has sown itself all along a real history; and

each one of its golden ears appears, like the remains of an ancient harvest, witnessing by its very nature to the soil which bore it and the moral climate which matured it.

Who can ignore to-day the change which has taken place in our way of considering and reading the Old Testament? Can any one reason about Moses and the Pentateuch as was done in the seventeenth century, before the secret of the composition and real date of those books were revealed to us? Can the traditions of Genesis have the same dogmatic weight which they had before, when we know that the earliest written edition was not anterior to the establishment of the kingdom in Israel? Hence how can one see more in them than the work of poetry, epic, or idyll, a cosmogony or a national legend which the imaginations of infantine nations ever weave like a golden veil around the cradle of their race? Must not one say the same of the books of Joshua, Judges, and Samuel? Are we not obliged to distinguish in all the others

between the substance and the form, between what is temporary and what is eternal, between what is too human and often too coarse, and the prophetic inspiration which is found throughout, though with more or less of imperfection? And when all the literary problems have been solved, when the age and the social environment of each document have been determined, if the poetic and legendary history which is called sacred history disperses itself in floating clouds, does not one see appear another more real and not less sacred or progressive revelation from God to the conscience of Israel, a divine education taking this people in its idolatrous and barbarous infancy, and elevating it by degrees from a national monolatry to the universal monotheism of the Prophets, and from this to the Fatherly Theism of Jesus of Nazareth?

Now, is this history, this revelation, which consists henceforth, not in supernatural notions, but in the creation and progressive purification of the idea of God in Israel, and in due course

in all humanity, less fertile in lessons, in themes for religious meditation, or of less value for edification, than the old dogmatic conception of a sacred history, whose framework has become too confined and has burst into fragments in every part? You consider with terror, perhaps with grief, what criticism makes you lose, the anthropomorphic illusions which it disperses, the miracles which it deprives you of—in a word, the ruins which it accumulates! Why should you regret all that, if that only represents in the edifice of divine revelation the stubble and hay left there by childish imagination or inexperienced thought? Rather consider with me what the Bible gains by this new method of considering it.

Is there not in the first place a sweet and invigorating thought in being convinced and in admitting that the revelation of God in the heart of humanity never ceases; that the Father is labouring ceaselessly at His work of redemption and salvation; that He has ever had His witnesses, His interpreters, His



workers, who form throughout the ages a shining and sacred band? Is it not delightful to think that God, to make Himself understood, always employs the same means; that our religious progenitors understood His voice no otherwise than ourselves, although representing it to themselves in a different way, and that we can hear Him speaking in our consciences as truly as they could: finally, that we have ever in Him our life, our movement, and our being; that it is in faith, not in light, that we are wanting, since His Spirit is rousing us and showing us the way in which we ought to go, the goal we ought to reach, and above all the sacrifice we are called upon to make? And, to go back to the history of Israel, will not this nation still remain the elect people, the prophets the very *élite* of their religion, and the Christ the supreme and unique flower of their divine tradition?

Permit me to insist yet more on a subject which causes so much difficulty to so many Christian consciences. You cannot, it is true,

accord to all the pages of the Bible the same degree of inspiration. You cannot fully identify the Father whom Christ reveals to us with the national Jehovah of Israel who orders such horrible exterminations and vengeance. The Jehovah anterior to the times of the prophets is not essentially different from the god Chemosh of Moab, whose commands (as they are revealed in the recently discovered inscription of King Mesa) are no less murderous and his jealousy no less implacable. But do you really regret him? Was not your conscience uneasy, were you not perplexed and scandalised in your old faith, when you read in Genesis and Numbers, in the Book of Joshua, in the biography of David, such violence and trickery attributed to the God whom you adored? You could not but ask yourself with pain if indeed it were necessary to attribute to God all for which the old historians of Israel make Him directly responsible? And you hazarded timid explanations, subtle allegorical contrivances, to lighten if not to get rid of this

biblical nightmare. Well then ! rejoice and be exceeding glad. This nightmare is dissipated, like all the spectres of the night, by the light of the dawning day. History, wisely interrogated, puts everything in its proper place. It teaches you to see in these books the documents of an ancient phase of the divine education of a people which was not meant to stop at that point : they have no more direct authority over the disciples of Christ than the customs of the Stone Age over the legislators of to-day. We are no longer the slaves of the letter, but the children of the spirit. Does not a more enlightened theology render us a signal service by obliging us to remember this ? Yes ! the Bible ever remains the house of God in which we and our fathers have been brought up ; but as sons and heirs of the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord we feel the right and freedom to move within it without fear, to walk up and down in it, to examine every part of it, and even to smile without irreverence, if in some corners of its cellars we catch sight of the

rods and other instruments, harsh or childish, which were formerly used for the education of our grandparents, if not for our own. I would recall the words of the Apostle Paul which should be written on the title-page of our Bibles: "All things are yours; whether Peter, Paul, or Apollos (and I would add, or Moses, Abraham, David or the prophets); and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's." The Bible is a great and a priceless heritage: it belongs to us; we do not belong to the Bible.

*Mutatis mutandis*, and whilst taking full account of the progress of religious inspiration, we look in the same way on the books of the New Testament; and the same historical method will produce the same effect in the enfranchisement of the spirit, and in positive edification. Just as the collection of writings of the Old Testament sums up for us the religious evolution of the people of Israel from its origin to the time of Christ, so the collection of the books of the New Testament reflects and recounts the evolution of primitive Christianity

up to its transformation into the Catholic Church towards the end of the second century. The most ancient documents of the collection are the Epistles of Paul to the Thessalonians, which date from A.D. 54, 55 ; the most recent is the Second Epistle of Peter, which is not anterior to the reign of Marcus Aurelius ; the others are scattered through the intervening interval of more than a century.

This historical conception of the New Testament makes its authority to be of a different but not a weaker kind. From being legal and external, as it was when viewed as a divine code or manual of doctrines, this authority becomes spiritual and moral. The editing and collecting of these books was the human work of the writers of the apostolic age. Though the form of their ideas or their language belong to their own age, we are not the less subject to the action of the Spirit which animated them : it speaks also in us, if we are Christians, sealing or confirming within our hearts their witness. Once again we

entreat you to weigh and compare what we lose against what we gain by this change. We have lost the intellectual security which gave to former theologians their legal method of establishing the divinity of a dogma by means of a series of classic texts called the *dicta probantia* of Holy Scripture. But what moral edification, what really beneficent emotion was there in an operation of that kind, which was purely formal and in which the intuitions of conscience had no part? On the other hand, these same writings, looked at from the historical standpoint, become at once living books, individual, witnessing with absolute sincerity to the very souls of their writers, to their struggles, to their victories, to their sufferings, to their consolation, to their fears, to their hopes, and consequently to the source which nourishes their faith. Under the weak or rude letter, under old reasonings, beneath old explanations, we feel the mighty throbs of a new life, warm and rich; we take note of decisive experiences which we can

reproduce in ourselves through the enduring action of the same faith and of the same spirit. I will give a striking example of it. Who has not remarked the intense life which the authentic Epistles of Paul, which remain to us, have gained in consequence of the labours of modern criticism and interpretation? Placed anew in the midst of the painful struggles which were their cause, read by the light of contemporary facts, the letters to the Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Philippians and Colossians not only stand out in extraordinarily strong relief, but they come to us with a pathetic and stirring accent, with a power of emotion, with an internal eloquence to which not even a sleepy soul can remain insensible. It is a bursting forth of soul, and what a soul! Do you regret your manual of religion, so abstract and cold? Do you ask where is God's part in these letters which are the immortal monument of the work of His grace in the conscience of a Pharisee? Believe me, this divine work does not lie

in moral or theological aphorisms, nor in the halting of a belated foreign style, nor in a rabbinical kind of logic and exegesis, for all that comes from the education and mental constitution of the man. God's part, His work, His witness, is something far rarer, far more extraordinary; it is the veritable creation of this great Christian soul, of this life of faith, of hope, of love. This divine letter, written not with ink on a dried papyrus, but by the Holy Spirit in letters of fire, in the heart and in the conscience of the Apostle, in his flesh daily quivering with its wounds—is that less worthy of God, less powerful over us than the doctrinal code which you regret? Do you think that this inspiration which creates life is less than that which suggests or dictates words?

The same apostle in his second letter to the Christians of Corinth cries: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." We shall be faithful to the spirit of his thought in applying this comparison to his own epistles and to all the other writings of the New



Testament. The intellectual clay which constitutes them is taken from the soil and surroundings from which they come. The divine life, of which the apostles are the bearers and heralds, is contained in an external covering of common notions, of traditions, of hereditary habits of reasoning and language which bind them closely to their own age. Hence we cannot draw from their works without discriminating between them. All the elements which are found there mixed up with divine inspiration are not equally useful to our modern dogmatism. We must distinguish between the letter and the spirit, between religious experience which can be renewed and verified constantly in our own consciences, and the temporary manner in which it first found expression ; briefly, in St. Paul's own words we must distinguish between the treasure and the clay. Is it by the vessel, is it not by the wine, that souls are nourished ?

The historical method which forces us to make this distinction renders a precious service

to Christian piety. Must not this piety feel a sense of relief in being no longer bound to disquiet itself for the letter which has been long dead, and in feeling that we can still gain edification from the Gospels and Epistles and even from the Apocalypse, and refresh ourselves with this divine marrow, without being obliged to go back eighteen hundred years in civilisation? For my part, the farther I get in my studies the more I congratulate myself—thanks to this historical and living conception of our sacred books—that I have no longer to consider it a religious duty to believe in the exactitude of the quotations of the Old Testament found in the New, and on that account to hold as divine the miraculous inspiration of the authors of the Alexandrine Version; to proclaim rabbinical expositions of St. Paul, or Philo's method of interpreting the Epistle to the Hebrews, to be divine; to believe that David wrote Psalm cx.; that the nervous maladies cured by Jesus were in fact demoniacal possessions;

that Luke could have committed no chronological error ; or that the speculations and calculations of the Apocalypse on the imminent end of the world are so many miraculous revelations from God.

We must reconsider our traditional idea of inspiration as well as other matters. To define divine inspiration is dangerous. To assert what it ought to be, instead of faithfully stating what it is, is rash. The presence of God, the mysterious action of His Spirit, makes itself felt ; it does not prove itself by an *a priori* method. We have no right to impose our conditions on God. If history, with its scrupulous criticism, proves that, instead of suppressing the normal psychological process in the sacred writers and reducing them to the passive condition of mere penmen, God respects their individuality because He has created and regenerated it, and makes use even of their infirmities to manifest thereby more clearly the riches and force of His grace, have we the right to call it in question ? If we find in

writings in which we feel the divine inspiration ideas now proved to be too narrow, errors in reasoning, legends and other unworthy matter, we must allow that that inspiration has nothing in common with the scientific infallibility that we have attributed to it. God's ways are not our ways ; it is more truly religious, and safer, to observe and follow them than to misunderstand and blame them, at the risk of finding ourselves, by our own fault, and on account of a theory which it has pleased us to make, obliged either to deny the action of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, or to play false with the clearest historical proofs.

#### IV

Let us consider the ecclesiastical dogmas, the second prop of our piety. When applied to this fresh subject, the historical method has had similar effects. No doubt it leads to a radical transformation of the very idea of dogma ; it obliges it to descend from the domain of the

absolute to that of the relative; instead of an eternal metaphysical truth guaranteed to Roman Catholics by the authority of the Church, and to Protestants by that of the Scriptures, we have only a theological phenomenon, that is, an effort of the collective Christian conscience to represent to itself, in the intellectual forms of a given epoch, the foundation of its experience and the object of its faith; we lose the illusion which made us believe in the immutability of dogmas; we see them henceforth in an evolution which nothing can arrest. What matters the loss of an illusion if at the same time we enter better into the spirit of the dogmas, if we distinguish in them the religious kernel from the intellectual husk, and if we are thus led to be nourished by the one without being in bondage to the other. To render our piety purer and more profound, and our liberty more complete—this is the double benefit which we may receive from this new study or method.

The history of dogmas teaches us three

things—their birth, their constituent elements, and the cause of their decay.

Christianity did not begin by formulas or theological definitions. The faith of the apostles was a heartfelt trust, a conscientious and willing devotion to the teaching of the Master, much more than a matter of reflection and theory. It was a germ whose life was folded back, as it were, and wrapt up upon itself. The germ could not but grow and unfold, and produce a new social organism, an activity of action and thought, equally intense and fruitful. But who does not see that this rich development, whether in the forms of ecclesiastical organisation, or in those of Christian preaching and apologetics, or the rules of faith fixed by competent authorities, would necessarily be determined and conditioned by the environment and the circumstances of the times? We cannot conceive of the Episcopal constitution of the Church in the time of Cyprian, with Rome as capital and centre of unity, if we do not connect that

Church with the Roman Empire, according to whose constitution it framed its own. In the same way, as regards the thought of the times, it is impossible to understand the doctrinal theology of Justin Martyr, of Clement of Alexandria, of Origen, and of Augustin, if you leave out of consideration the culture of Greece, and the Neo-Platonic philosophy, or the Stoicism, of which these great men were the disciples before becoming disciples of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Side by side with this inevitable influence of their surroundings there is that also of historical events; I refer to the disputes, divisions, and differences in the Church itself. The dogmas are the offspring of the theological controversies. The faith, at first undefined, tends to become precise. Different interpretations arise. Diversities of opinion beget conflicts. Thus, on the morrow of Christ's death, the great struggle between Paul and the Judaising Christians burst forth. Then followed the long controversies with Gnosticism and with

Montanism. In order to defend itself the Church drew up the Rule of Faith, whose kernel it found in the baptismal formula. This kernel when developed became, after three or four centuries, the so-called Apostles' Creed, to which a legend of later date gave a legal and finally a sacred authority over all Western Christendom. In the same way the Nicene Creed sprang out of the Arian controversy; then that of Constantinople; and that which falsely bears the name of Athanasius, came from the interminable disputes concerning the two natures of Christ and of the Trinity. I do not now discuss the value of these dogmas and creeds; what I wish simply to set forth is the accidental character of their birth, and their indissoluble relation to the practical needs of the times to which it was necessary to respond. These dogmas did not come down from heaven; they are the result of centuries of thought and controversy, and it is very difficult to judge them by any other standard than that which we apply to the controversies them-



selves, and to the theological learning of those who carried them on.

No doubt those dogmas contain in substance the essence of Christianity, and it is that which makes them venerable in our eyes. But evidently this essence of Christianity is not there alone; indeed in the concrete and in history it never exists alone and in a perfectly pure condition. It is a spirit which has need of a body to make itself manifest, of an organ by which to act and to propagate itself. What is, then, the body in this case?

The reply to this question has now become hackneyed. It is so evident and simple that in making it one seems to utter a mere truism. Those who conceived and drew up these first definitions of Christian faith thought in Greek and spoke Greek. To begin with, the mere fact of turning into Greek the Gospel of Christ, first preached in Aramaic or in Hebrew, implies a profound revolution of ideas. A language—all philologists admit it—is not a mode of expression of an indifferent or neutral char-

acter. Not only are hereditary ideas always inherent in the words of its vocabulary, but there is a special kind of philosophy in its grammar and in its syntax, that is to say, in that internal logic by which words are united the one to the other, and ideas are associated together. The Greek language, in the first century, was a very old language, whose terms had for a long time meanings which nothing could make them alter. It was a foreign mould into which the Christian inspiration was run all hot and liquid, but in which it cooled and solidified, and out of which it came in new forms, which a Galilean who had listened to Jesus would have recognised with difficulty.

Besides the language there was a scholastic philosophy which had become well known, from which the apostolic Fathers, the apologists, the theologians of Alexandria borrowed necessarily, together with their terminology, forms of thought, logical categories, general notions, which had no equivalent in the language and the religion of the Hebrews; cate-

gories of substance and accidents, of essence and its hypostases, of nature and its attributes, of the "to be" and the "not to be," of the perfect and the incomprehensible God, and of the revelation of His Logos. Take away these notions from the orthodox system of theology elaborated by the great councils, and is it not evident that you take away its cement, that you destroy its unity, and that all falls away in confusion? Look once again at this edifice as it is presented to us in the classical treatise of John of Damascus concerning the orthodox faith; will you not admit that it is Greek not only in language but also in construction, and in the very nature of its materials? It is Greek architects who have constructed it, and it is from the marble quarries of Greece that the rough stone is taken. One is sometimes amazed to see, in the Middle Ages, the authority of Aristotle and of Plato placed on an equal footing with that of the Fathers of the Church, of the prophets and the apostles. Nothing is more

logical, if the orthodoxy of the great councils is the work of the Holy Spirit.

From the moment one has recognised the share which human and historic philosophy have had in the constitution of ancient dogmas, one recognises that they are exposed to the process of growing antiquated. To declare them unchangeable is not only, as is supposed, to proclaim the unchangeableness of Christianity; it is to proclaim eternal and divine, as they did in the Middle Ages, the philosophy of Aristotle and Plato, of the Stoics and of the Neo-Platonists of the decadence. That in all these there exists what should be collected together and preserved, no one doubts; that all should be eternally maintained in its original and primitive sense, no one can admit without deluding himself. The Greek language is dead, and our modern languages are as far removed from it as it was itself far removed from the impoverished Hebrew idiom. Three or four revolutions have renewed philosophy, a new civilisation

has been born, the whole perspective of the universe has been changed, our mental constitution itself has been modified, and it is as difficult for us to-day to think in Greek as to speak it.<sup>1</sup>

Hence it becomes an incontestable truth that no theologian of our day repeats and professes the dogmas of the great councils in the sense which they had for those who saw their birth or origin. Every one accommodates them, more or less consciously, to his own use, translates them into his language, takes or leaves portions as it pleases him; in a word, *re-thinks* them in his mind, and in *re-thinking* them, interprets and transforms them. Well, modern theology invites us simply to do with reflection and truthfulness that which we all do more or less and which we cannot help doing. And do we not see that, far from being the death of dogma, this faculty of transformation

<sup>1</sup> Consider the history of these three words which are supposed to be the translation of one another—*ὑπόστασις*, *persona*, *person*.

by a new exegesis is the only way by which dogma can be rejuvenated and revived, the only way for us to reap its internal or spiritual substance, the Christian reality by which our religious life can and ought to be nourished? Shall we hesitate resolutely to enter on this path? The Fathers of the Church had the right, and were right, to translate into Greek the Gospel of the apostles; have we not, too, the right and the duty to translate in our turn their Greek theology into the language of our day? In accomplishing their mission in their own time and place they brought home to the Greek conscience the message of salvation destined for it by God. Is it not our mission to follow in their steps, and in our turn to repeat, by means of our new resources, thoughts, and language, this same message, in order that it may be brought home to the consciences of our contemporaries? We should be faithless or useless workers if we did otherwise.

There is a positive blessing, a precious fruit,

in this work of criticism and explanation, patiently pursued under the eye of God. In learning to separate, in the dogmatic work of past ages, the human and decayed element from the permanent and divine, we are led to get ever nearer to the Gospel itself, to lay hold on, and to lay to heart more completely, that which constitutes its truth and its power, and thereby to strengthen in ourselves, and to propagate amongst all with whom we are in contact, true religion and piety. I should like to show this by sketching the history of the doctrine of the Atonement, and recalling the phases through which it has passed.<sup>1</sup>

## V

The Greek fathers distinguished between two parts of the work of redemption: one

<sup>1</sup> Properly speaking there is no dogma of the Atonement; but there is no doctrine that orthodox Roman Catholicism or Protestantism has maintained with more energy than that of a satisfaction by bloodshed given to God by Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. On this idea rests for the Roman Catholic all the value of the expiatory sacrifice of the Mass, and for the Protestant the abstract possibility of the pardon of sin.

part negative, the abolition of the penalty due to sin ; the other positive, the communication of life divine to men. Hence two parallel theories. All the positive work of redemption, the communication of the divine life, was the work of the incarnate Logos. By taking human nature the Logos transformed and infused into it the very principle of His divinity. It was a kind of transformation of substance outside the region of physics, which the Greek theologians expressed by the antithesis of these two words *θεοανθρωποποίησης θεοποίησης*. The same act of incarnation which humanised the divine nature also gave divine life to the human nature. From this point of view the decisive moment in the work of redemption was not the death of Christ, but the incarnation of the Son of God. From this metaphysical conception of redemption flows the kind of devotion which has prevailed, even down to our day, in the orthodox Greek Church.

The death of Christ nevertheless had its part, but it was not connected with the will of God as leading or enabling it to pardon, but with the



tyrannical right which Satan had acquired over men, and which it was necessary to overthrow. The devil by causing men to fall into sin had made them his captives and slaves by a legitimate right of property. God could by His power deliver them ; but being just He desired to follow the course of justice, even when dealing with the prince of injustice. God therefore made a contract with him in due form. God proposed an exchange, by which He gave the soul of His only-begotten Son, which was of infinite value, in exchange for the souls of poor human beings. Blinded by pride, Satan accepts the offer with joy. The Son of God dies and descends into hell, whose brazen gates open to admit this divine prey, and lets the human souls escape. Then Satan finds that he has been taken in. His covetousness has gone too far for his power. The end had not been reached when he received into his infernal dominions the Eternal Son over whom death had no power ; He must be *kept* there. But hell, like the whole

universe, trembles before Him as before God Himself. Satan, conquered and deceived, is forced to let Him ascend again to the right hand of the Father and into the glory of heaven with all those whom He had thus delivered.

In a word, the death of Christ was a ransom paid to Satan not to God, a ransom which deceived the deceiver. Satan is not only despoiled, he is made ridiculous, and so remains in all the mystery-plays of the Middle Ages. A great theologian, Gregory Nazianzen, is delighted to declare it. Speaking seriously of a passage in the Book of Job: "Wilt thou capture leviathan with a hook?" Gregory exclaims with an accent of triumph: "What was impossible to man God has done; He has thrown a hook to leviathan, while taking care to hide it under the bait of the flesh of His Son. The voracious fish seized this unexpected prey; but caught by the divine hook he was obliged to disgorge, and so release all the victims he had already devoured." Such

was the orthodox doctrine during more than six centuries.

If this theory delighted the imagination and excited the devotion of the people, it did not fail to disturb souls of a higher kind of morality, like that of Augustin. They thought that it was inadmissible that God, in strict justice, owed anything to Satan but the punishment of his crimes, and could only see in the proceeding thus attributed to God a comedy really unworthy of Him.

Anselm of Canterbury undertook to replace this old theory by one more acceptable. He succeeded in doing so by substituting for the idea of a ransom paid to the devil, a ransom paid to God.

I am not going to make a *résumé* of the *Cur Deus Homo* of the celebrated doctor; I will only recall two things: the legal base of its deductions, and the mathematical solution of the problem. Anselm's reasoning was based on the German legal principle which gave to the guilty person the power of redeeming his

penalty by furnishing to the person offended an equivalent reparation or satisfaction. A crime committed was a debt to be paid. In offending, by his sin, the infinite honour of God, man had contracted an infinite debt to God. Man was unable to acquit it, for all his future virtues he naturally owed to God, and therefore these could not serve to compensate for the old debt. Man was consequently an eternal debtor and condemned to an eternal penalty unless some one who was rich enough came forward to pay the debt for him. God made Himself man because God only could restore to God the honour which was due to Him by man. But be it borne in mind that Christ does not save us by His active obedience, by His holiness of life, for that obedience and holiness are due from Christ personally to God on the same grounds as in the case of other beings. But what Christ does not owe is His sufferings and death, because, never having sinned, He never merited punishment. These sufferings and death of the God-Man being of

infinite value constituted a mass of supererogatory merits which were able to serve as payment of the human debt. There was thus equality between what God had lost and the reparation which was offered to Him. This equilibrium established, the insolvent debtor was released. Such, since the Middle Ages, has been the orthodox doctrine of expiation.

That this doctrine easily found credit in the Roman Catholic Church, which made such a wonderful profit of the theory by the sale of indulgences ; that this conception of sin under the form of a debt, and of divine grace under that of an external transfer of a debt, should have satisfied the inferior morality of the Middle Ages, I can believe without difficulty. What astonishes me more is the no less cordial acceptance accorded to it by the reformers, above all by Luther. They were won no doubt by the infinite gravity which this theory seemed to give to sin, and by the utter indebtedness to which it reduced the sinner. But how was it that they did not perceive that this weight of

sin was wholly external to man ; that the sin did not touch human nature, but only the divine nature ; and that sin only acquired an infinite gravity because of the infinity of the God who was offended, but did not bear witness at all to the radical corruption of man who is the offender? Moreover there is no place left in the theory of Anselm either for repentance or for regeneration. The penalty alone is thought of : as soon as this is removed, man, as he is, claims his entrance into heaven as a right. We are as St. Paul said under the economy of the law, not under that of grace.

The starting-point of all these theories of Atonement lies in assimilating the death of Christ to the sacrifices of the old covenant. This likeness naturally laid hold on the first disciples of Christ, who were all Jews. They could not conceive of the institution of a new covenant without bloodshed. So it was that the comparison often recurs in the writings of Paul, Peter, and John, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. But is it not clear that it is

an abuse of the comparison when only the analogies between the two sacrifices are brought out while the differences are omitted? The proof that the notion of the Levitical sacrifice does not coincide with the reality of that on Calvary, is that it allows the essential character of this latter to escape. The victim immolated on the altar of Jehovah did not freely give itself up to the sacrificial knife ; it died passively and unwillingly. But what is in contrast to this, and forms the originality and newness of the sacrifice of Calvary, is that the Victim and the Sacrificer are one. Jesus of His own free will gives and delivers Himself up, and His death is an act of love, and is the crowning-point of a whole life of sacrifice and love. Where then is the price, where is the redeeming virtue, of this sacrifice if not in the love to which it bears witness? What is it that touches us in the agonies of the Saviour, in His humiliations, in His sufferings, in the shedding of His blood, except this, that it is the supreme revelation of the Father's love by which God reconciles the

world to Himself? The ransom then, since there is certainly a ransom, is not paid to the devil, for the devil has no right to it; it is not paid to God, because the Father has no need of it; it has been paid to sinners by the very love of Jesus who desired to save them.

Is it not on the base of this redeeming virtue of love that a new theory of the Atonement can be built up?

You ask whither this critical review of ancient dogmas leads, and what service it can render. This example shows it plainly to us. By following this historical path we are always going from the circumference and surface of Christianity to its living centre, from the bark to the sap, from human theories to primitive fact, to the creative force of the Gospel of which these theories wish to give a translation, but which they in their weakness never translate without more or less betraying or violating. There are tropical fruits whose fresh and savoury pulp is hidden beneath two or three hard and dry envelopes. We must



first remove these in order to get at the nourishing kernel or the thirst-quenching juice.

But let us sum up the result of our study in the following propositions :--

(1) Our piety is disquieted and troubled by the antagonism obscurely felt between the new truths and ancient beliefs. Christian science can bring peace and dissipate our disquiet.

(2) As regards Holy Scripture, the radical transformation of old dogmatic views touching inspiration and the canon has the advantage of delivering our piety from the intolerable yoke of the letter, and rendering us more attentive and more strongly attached to the spirit. Instead of a code, we have a book of life and fire. The Bible is no longer itself the revelation of God, but it is, as it were, the muniment room where its documents are preserved.

(3) So also Christian science renders traditional dogmas really useful by renewing their interpretation.

(4) Called ceaselessly in this way to distinguish everywhere between changing

forms and secure foundation, between that which is essential and that which is but accessory, our piety necessarily gains in spirituality and morality; it is obliged to fall back on its principles, on the personal experience of its truth, on the present and inward witness of the Holy Spirit, the source of all certainty and peace to the Christian's soul.

(5) Once having arrived at the conviction of the relative value of dogmatic forms as regards Christianity, which is "spirit and life," Christians of different denominations will no longer feel separated by insurmountable barriers. Their brotherly communion will become sweeter and less restrained, the feeling of their oneness deeper, the reality of the great family of God on earth more real than ever. Christian science is called to give peace to individual souls, and peace to the Churches.

## VI

Now I come to the last question. What shall be our attitude as regards the formularies and the dogmatic symbols in use among different Churches? The reply comes from the principles developed in the foregoing discussion. Our theological method logically determines our conduct in practice.

Our attitude cannot be either a blind reaction or a violent rupture; it can neither be an adhesion without criticism, nor a revolt without piety. How can we, with a good conscience, break with the traditions of the first centuries, or with the Protestant tradition of modern centuries, when we have the conviction that we are their legitimate children, and desire to reap and cultivate their inheritance?

The more I advance the more I feel attached to the tradition of my fathers by all the very roots of my life, and in thinking of my old Reformed Church of France, of its liturgy, of the old confession of faith of La

Rochelle, of its Psalms and canticles, I feel I can cry aloud with the old Hebrew poet, exiled on the banks of the Euphrates: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget itself." And this is no easy sceptical adaptation, a sort of disdainful or hypocritical diplomatic arrangement; it is rather the love and the gratitude of the child. In gathering with reverence all the moral riches of this family tradition, my most ardent desire would be to prolong it and to make it yet more fruitful.

To confirm us in this method, and in this course of conduct, we have the example even of Jesus Christ. We know what was His attitude in reference to the law of Moses and the tradition of His people. No Israelite was ever attached to them with a more sincere heart or with a deeper piety. Far from breaking with the past, He desired that His Gospel should be to all a continuation and a crowning work. No doubt the new matter which He brought disagreed with certain

rabbinical traditions, or modified them by broadening out certain prescriptions of the law; but, on the other hand, His teaching set free the deeper spirit, the religious and moral ideal of the sacred code and of the old prophecies, and He could in 'all truth declare that He came not to destroy but to fulfil the law and the prophets. Such is the way in which we, too, attach ourselves positively to the dogmatic traditions of the Christian Church.

But this method of Jesus implies also that this tradition of the past is neither completed nor perfect. To correct or to develop it, and consequently to remain relatively free in reference to it, now becomes our duty even more than our right. In our Protestant Churches, at any rate, none of which affirms or believes itself to be infallible, it seems to me impossible that any one can demand of a theologian, or of any one else, a literal adherence to ancient formularies. We evangelical Christians possess the inalienable right

to interpret the text of Scripture, and to draw from this fountain on our own responsibility ; must we not, therefore, have the right to interpret the text of our ecclesiastical creeds, whose authority must, as a principle, remain subordinate to that of Scripture? It is not the Church which is the direct object of our faith ; it is not her guarantee which gives certainty to our salvation and to our life in God. No ; this certainty rests upon the twofold witness of the Holy Spirit, which we hear both in the Scriptures and in our own conscience.

Perhaps the question will be asked : Would it not be better to renounce wholly the ancient dogmas in order to formulate new ones on which a new Church should be built ? This solution, which a simple and radical logic seems to recommend, and which would be pleasing to minds of an absolutist type, should, it seems to me, be put aside for several reasons. The first, which will dispense us from seeking others, is that such a solution is impossible of realisation.

The Christianity of our day is not capable of effectually formulating and sanctioning new dogmas. Œcumenical Councils have had their day. To dream of calling one together, in the state of division which exists among Christians, is chimerical.

A dogma is not a mathematical truth, but a symbol. The merit of a symbol specially consists in the power it possesses of evoking the idea of the object it represents. Creeds are of value, not from what they say, but from what they make us feel. They are veils transparent to faith, which enable us to contemplate in our own conscience the God whom it is a necessity for us to worship. For this very reason the dogmas which we contemplate as symbols lend themselves without difficulty or violence to transformations, to indefinite interpretations; and, since it is theology which prepares and brings in these new and rejuvenated interpretations, and causes them to be accepted, so in a like degree does the mission of theologians increase in importance.

The theological work is a necessary function in every Church. Side by side with apostles and prophets, and immediately after them, Paul names doctors or teachers (1 Cor. xii. 28). It is a *charisma* or spiritual gift, a ministry which God has given to His people from the beginning, and which they cannot dispense with without loss. Since ideas change from generation to generation, and intellectual needs change also, who can re-establish the broken concord between the formulas of yesterday and the thought of to-day? Who will make the necessary translation of ancient ideas into new ones? Who will show the continuity of living Christian thought amidst the accidents, the contradictions, and the revolutions of history? Jesus seems to have defined and consecrated this mission of the theologian when He said that the wise doctor or teacher is he who from the good treasure of his knowledge and piety continually brings forth things old and new.

It is true that, when new things appear, timid souls are at first startled and alarmed.



But when, here below, has a serious mission, a fruitful work, ever been accomplished without a deprecatory cry from those who do not wish to be disturbed in their habits or awakened from their slumbers? Are not all birth-throes painful? Has the Christian conscience ever risen from one step to another of the spiritual life without struggles and suffering?

The Apostolic Church was agitated by a terrible crisis when first Stephen and then Paul, in order to free the spiritual and moral principle of the Gospel and to gain the victory for it, proclaimed the downfall of the Mosaic institutions, the nothingness of outward circumcision and legal practices, the independence of the new covenant upon the old. In the sixteenth century came the same crisis of conscience, the same tempest in the spiritual world. And now, for the third time, an analogous crisis is shaking Christendom. It is in reality the third phase of the same conflict; it is the continuation of the ceaseless struggle between the spirit and the letter, between morality and legality. More

certainly, and with more consciousness of its power, the Christian principle is seeking to free itself from the swaddling-clothes of an intellectual formalism, which, having served its time, menaces a conflict between itself and the modern conscience ; it seeks to strengthen itself in its pure spirituality and in its liberty as regards the historical formulas in which it has been bound. Why should there again be alarm or doubts as to the victory ? The destinies of the Gospel are not in the hands of man, but of God. Like all former crises, that which Christianity is traversing to-day is not a crisis of death but of growth. It depends only upon our faith to reap its benefits.



III

THE POSITIVE BASIS OF THE  
THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

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## THE POSITIVE BASIS OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE FUTURE

IF we are to attempt with any prospect of success a forecast of the theology of the future, we must begin by pointing out the faults of the theology of the past, from which that of the present is trying to free itself; we must point out clearly the basis on which a new development of theology must rest; and we must give illustrations of the way in which theological conceptions or doctrines will probably be affected. This is what, though in the merest outline, will be attempted in the present paper.

Let me, however, first say a word of necessary caution. The changes which occur from time to time in Christian theology are not,

for the most part, changes in the essential groundwork of faith, but in the method of its presentation. This is well put in Professor Sabatier's excellent pamphlet on "The Vitality of Christian Dogmas and their Power of Evolution." After pointing out how the dogmas of justification by faith and of the universal priesthood came into prominence at the Reformation, he adds, "New dogmas, do we call them? Rather, we should say, old ones rising again with new energy." Dr. Washington Gladden, in his popular work entitled *How much is left of the old Doctrines?* has shown how all the essential truths enshrined in the creeds, and in the formulas of the Reformation, remain to us unimpaired and invigorated, though the form in which they must be expressed is different. We may, I think, be still bolder, and say that modern knowledge leads us to understand and set forth these doctrines more fully as well as more vividly.

Bishop Westcott in his *Christus Consummator*

declares that even the recent teachers of Naturalism and Pantheism "direct us to aspects of the Incarnation which have not yet become the heritage of the Church." "It is no disloyalty to the past," he says, "to maintain that the view of the Incarnation which was gained in the fourth or fifth or thirteenth or sixteenth century was not final." "And," he adds, "it is, I think, impossible to look at modern writings without perceiving that the teaching on Christ's Person which is current in the most reverent schools falls short in many ways of the living fulness of the Bible." This is the case, I venture to say, in reference to the whole field of theology; and, just as Dr. Arnold used to say that the more he loved an institution, the more eager he was for its reform, so those who most deeply feel the importance of the great truths of theology must most desire to see them rid of false or antiquated elements with which they have been encrusted, and to set them in the most living and actual manner before the men of this generation. It



is in this sense that we must speak of the old theology and the new.

1. The first phenomenon which meets our eye in looking at the theology of the past is that it has been a constant source of disunion. From the time when the idea expressed by the term "orthodoxy" was first invented,—that is, when correctness of opinion began to be thought the main test of a Christian,—the Church has been the scene of quarrelling. There is a well-known picture of an historical scene in which the Emperor Julian asks the heads of the various Church parties of his day to discuss their tenets in his presence, and they are represented as wrangling and contradicting each other with great bitterness. At the close of the interview, Gibbon says, the emperor saw that he had not much to fear in the attack that he meditated on the Church. It is true that during the Middle Ages there was a certain check put, by the supreme power of the Pope, on the tendency to division; but only a certain check. As soon as knowledge and thought

began to revive, theology begat controversy. Almost every century found Christendom divided by some great doctrinal dispute, like that on Election in the eighth century, conducted by John Scotus Erigena ; or that on the Sacrament in the eleventh century, conducted by Berengar of Tours ; or that of Abelard and Bernard on the Atonement in the twelfth ; or of the Albigenses and the anti-sacerdotalists in the thirteenth ; or of Wycliff and Huss in the fourteenth and fifteenth. And, when the Reformation came, though its first outburst was owing to a distinct protest of the conscience in favour of truth and morality, the minds of the leaders were very soon engaged in mutual denunciation and persecution on the most abstruse doctrinal questions, like that of the mode of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Then came the definitions of Trent, which converted the churches of the Roman obedience into one great militant sect, and then the numerous sects into which Protestantism has been divided, which have justified the triumph of men like Bossuet over the

divisions of Protestants, and have been one great cause of timid souls succumbing to the imposing unity of the Roman system.

We have been too ready to excuse these evils. We have said that truth must be sought, even at the expense of unity. But, while we may admit this as an abstract proposition, we must also admit and insist that strife is an evidence that truth is in great danger. For the truth we speak of is Christian truth, which is a truth of life, and centres in love. God is love, and love to God and man is that on which the whole system hinges, and the test of true discipleship. Where, therefore, we see strife and division, we cannot comfort ourselves by supposing that this is a mark of the presence of truth. It is, of course, true that there may be disunion, which is recognised as an evil, but, like Lot's separation from Abraham, is endured as an alternative to a greater evil. But disunion is always an evil, and when we see men acquiescing in it, and not striving for its removal, we see a doom upon the system they

are following. There is, thank God, in the present day, a sense of this evil, and, notwithstanding some appearances to the contrary, a longing for union. There is an earnest desire to make less of the points of difference, and more of the great truths which all Christians acknowledge. This, then, we may take as the first postulate of the theology of the future: it will demand that whatever is asserted shall make for union and love.

But it has often been pointed out that the mere lopping off of differences is neither a satisfying nor a truthful process; and further, that there will always remain some truths which, as soon as we set to work to define them, present a ground for difference. We fail to see this because we repeat theological terms without inquiry until some assertion which shocks us is made. We do not perceive that we are attaching to them a conventional sense which by no means covers the whole case, and that the most contradictory ideas may be hidden under the same word. If you take

only the assertion of the existence of God, all kinds of questions lie hidden under this affirmation. Is it a personal being, like man, that you mean, or a power undefined? Is He transcendent or immanent? Is He one or manifold? What of the Incarnation? What of the Trinity? Above all, what is the character you attribute to Him? Many more questions may be raised, which, if pursued with the determination to get exact logical answers which all men alike are to recognise, may give birth to disputes and sects as bitter and as numerous as those of the past. Yet the awe and reverence, and the sense of fatherly love, which the thought of God excites are in no way diminished because we do not attempt to give precise answers to these questions.

It is the process which is vicious, the process which demands that religious truth should be stated in exact definitions. It is both illusory and unsatisfying. We assert the divinity of our Lord;—does that mean a moral or a metaphysical supremacy? We

assert our belief in the Holy Spirit ;—have we taken in the seven spirits of God, the “ eyes of God sent forth over all the earth ” ? Inspiration ;—do we mean exactness in statement, or a Divine spirit breathing through the whole book or the whole organism ? The Atonement ;—does that mean substituted penalty or union in self-sacrificing love ? The Incarnation ;—does that mean a single miraculous fact, or the indwelling of God in man, which culminates in Christ ? Even if we can define such points, yet our definitions help us but little. The Council of Trent tried to define Justification by Faith as against Luther ; but Martin Boos, the evangelical Catholic priest, grounded his teaching, which was indistinguishable from Luther’s, on the Tridentine decrees. One definition leads to another, till we are overloaded with a *Corpus Theologiæ*, and at the end of it we have to confess that little of any worth has been said. As Augustine exclaimed, after long definitions of the Trinity : “ I have said nothing worthy of God ; our best statement

about Him is silence ; I only know that the word Deus denotes a certain most excellent and immortal nature."

It is the dogmatic process, I repeat, which is vicious. We must be more humble, more conscious of the greatness of the object we are dealing with. We must remember such words as these—"No man hath seen God at any time ;" "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know ;" "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth ;" "Such wisdom cometh not from above ;" "Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work." The theology of the future must be grounded upon love and humility ; it must not be the assertion of what we think true in a dogmatic, unsympathising way, but must be accompanied by the confession that we know little, and that we and our brethren are still fellow-scholars ; and it must be steadied by the constant application of the touchstone of love to our assertions and to their results. This does not imply that we are

uncertain and vacillating, but that our certainty is of a different kind from that which belongs to mathematics or to physical science; that it is, like all moral truth, a matter to be described rather than defined, to be felt and experienced rather than made intellectually precise.

Baxter says:<sup>1</sup> "I am not so foolish as to pretend my certainty to be greater than it is merely because it is a dishonour to be less certain; nor will I by shame be kept from confessing those infirmities which those have as much as I who hypocritically reproach me with them. My certainty that I am a man is before my certainty that there is a God, for *quod facit notum est magis notum*; my certainty that there is a God is greater than my certainty that He requireth love and holiness of His creature; my certainty of this is greater than my certainty of the life of reward and punishment hereafter; my certainty of that is greater

<sup>1</sup> *A Narrative of the most memorable Passages of my Life and Times*, by Richard Baxter. (End of 2nd book. This portion republished in tract form by James Parker and Co., Oxford and London, p. 15.)



than my certainty of the endless duration of it, and of the immortality of individual souls ; my certainty of the Deity is greater than my certainty of the Christian faith ; my certainty of the Christian faith is greater than my certainty of the perfection and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures ; my certainty of that is greater than my certainty of the meaning of many particular texts ; and so of the truth of many particular doctrines, or of the canonicalness of certain books. So that you see, by what gradations my understanding doth proceed, so also my certainty differeth as the evidences differ."

The result of the insistence on dogmatic statements on matters incapable in their nature of exact definition has been that men are associated together not according to the real needs of individuals and of society, but according to the old dogmatic statements which divide them. Even in the parochial system, which ought to be the point of union for those who seek to carry the Christian spirit into every home and every sphere of human

endeavour, we constantly find this work of the Christianising of life hindered by peculiar beliefs, or rather traditions and customs, about ordination or the sacrament, or the mode of public worship. It must be confessed by us all that our worshipping communities are very frequently not among the things which make for righteousness, but among those which hinder it. The theology of the future must think far less of definitions of belief, and must look straight at that which makes life loving and just in the family, the parish, the system of trade, the arts, the school, the city, the commonwealth. So far as it makes use of definitions, it must make every effort to bring them into touch with the actual life and thought of mankind. It is this which will mitigate its primary fault of contentiousness.

2. A second fault of past theology is its wilfulness. In the great diversity of opinion and systems, choice and even caprice have certainly had their share. From the days of the Gnostics in the second century through all

the controversies which began with Arianism, through the endless disputations of the schoolmen to those of the Protestant churches, we have a series of mere opinions, sometimes held by individuals, sometimes by knots and circles of sympathisers, sometimes by great aggregates like those who submit to the Roman obedience, or to the Anglican or Presbyterian forms. It is not so much that men have been insincere, but that they have not realised their responsibility. To make an assertion, to urge it upon others, to form the lives of the young or the poor or the heathen converts upon it, even to ban those who would not agree to it, has seemed to them a light thing. The word "dogma" means, first, the opinion of an authoritative teacher, then the decree of a body of men. It seems to imply that a matter which truth would have left unsettled can be settled by human wills. And so, the stronger and louder the affirmation, the more have the weaker men acquiesced; but the more also have dogmatists on the opposite

side asserted themselves, while stronger men have rebelled. From this scene of wilfulness and strife men have turned away; and when they have come under the spell of science in any department, and have seen men who really know working patiently on from discovery to discovery, fearing to make assertions, and ready to be corrected by the dawning of new light, they have, naturally enough, contrasted with this truthful, sober process the methods pursued by theologians, and have looked on the whole field of theology as a dreamland and a chaos. I think that theologians are becoming conscious of this. They are less vehement in their assertions, less prone to condemn. They are also inclined to listen to the advice so often tendered to them, to pay more attention to history, so that they may understand how matters have appeared to successive generations of men within and without the Church, and to appreciate even the statements of the Bible not as if they were abstract assertions, but according to the time and circumstances of

the writers, and as part of the orderly development of the human mind working under the direction of the Spirit of God. The theology of the future must be constantly checked by historical researches, by the criticism of ancient documents, and by scientific discoveries, and must be an outgrowth from the theology of the past and the present.

3. A third fault in theology has been its archaic phraseology. One of the most salutary measures of the Reformation was that which made religion vernacular and "understanded of the people"; and one of the most important aspects of this change was that it liberated men from clerical dominion. The clerical party resisted the change, because it gave the laity a freedom which they distrusted. They had kept the key of knowledge in their own hands, and they did not willingly part with it. The vigorous resolution of William Tyndale, "I will make the man that driveth the plough to know more of the Bible than thou dost," could not but seem to his priestly interlocutor both a

degrading and a dangerous purpose. And, even after the translation of the Bible into English had been resolved upon, men like Gardiner tried to introduce such words as "penance," "azymes," "co-inquination." Such terms were, as Tyndale said, "no true English," and the unlearned must come to the clergy for the interpretation: moreover, the use of them seemed to identify men with the clerical party. It was a bad policy, and frequently excited a revenge of mockery, like the ribald change which is said to have turned "Hoc est corpus" into "Hocus-pocus." We have not wholly escaped from this; and one great danger of the use of the abstract technical terms of traditional theology is its tendency to drive religion out of common life into a close "forbidden city" of mystery, into which you cannot enter without a guide. Even our hymns are not free from this; our religious language often becomes what our French friends call a *Patois de Chanaan*; and it is certainly among the worst effects of the recitation of the Athanasian

Creed in public that it gives men the impression that religion is a kind of black-letter knowledge, instead of being like that which "the common people heard gladly." We crave a return to simplicity and actuality.

We have thus made three demands as to the theology of the future.

1st, It must cease to be contentious; it must make for union and love; it must aim less at exactness of definition and more at the kingdom and righteousness of God.

2nd, It must lay aside wilfulness and pursue scientific methods, rising cautiously from fact to general truth, and verifying its assertions from the evidence of history.

3rd, It must be simple and straightforward.

The first great change must be in our method. Theology has commonly started with *a priori* arguments. I do not know whether any serious attempt has been made to build it up, like other systems of knowledge, on a solid induction of facts. We are in a scientific age, and must use scientific processes; for the

conditions of our life and thought, scientific discovery, criticism, our social state, are not made by us: they are the conditions which God has made for us; and to ignore them would be as much to fly in His face as to ignore His revelation in the Bible.

Before endeavouring to give a sketch of the use of the better method, I wish to point out two things which may prevent misunderstanding.

(1) The use of scientific methods does not imply that we limit ourselves to results such as would satisfy the Positivist or the Agnostic scientist. Such reasoners begin, rightly enough as it seems to me, with facts rather than ideas, but are afraid of going so far, even in the way of inference, as the facts would warrant, and will not admit the part which faith and hope may rightly play. The Positivist will not say that there is no God, but assumes that we have no faculties for knowing Him if He exists. The Agnostic confesses a Power behind the phenomena of the world, but declares that this Power is wholly unknowable. But, if all



nature and history are the result of the action of this Power, a study of nature and history must reveal to us its character—the cause is known by its effects. The very fact that we can conceive of God implies that we have faculties which give us at least a power of judging whether God is, and what is His character. It may be intellectually but a probability, but it is a probability capable of growing to full assurance. Again, there are many things which must always be matters of faith and hope, which, nevertheless, we make the basis of action. I spend my life upon efforts which may be fruitless, but I trust that they will bear a rich harvest of good; and such trust, as St. Paul says, “maketh not ashamed.” I risk myself (it is the special property of love to take such risks) in the belief that my love will beget some blessed return, if not to myself, yet to duty and goodness. It is true that the feelings which I hope for may not be there; but they may be. At all events, I must act upon a probability, which trustfulness and hope raise

to an assurance. Why should I hesitate to act in a similar way in the great questions, whether God is, and what is His character, and whether Christ is a real revelation or disclosure of God?

Only we must distinguish between those things which belong to science, which is positive, exact, verifiable knowledge, and those, often more precious and more real to us, which lie in the region of faith and hope. Those who think some of the traditional dogmas insufficient for religious teaching in the present day are sometimes accused of vagueness, or of a want of precision, which implies a want of faith. But this is often the contrary of the fact; for, first, it is not precision but truth that faith demands; and, secondly, there are many subjects, especially moral and religious subjects, which do not admit of precision such as are rightly required in the exact sciences: they must be described, as Aristotle says, "roughly imaged forth" (*παχυλῶς καὶ τύπῳ*). And further, when we are dealing with matters

in which precise historic certainty only carries us a little way, and has to be supplemented by the faith and hope which tend to the higher moral assurance, the demand of truth, and even of precision, is not that we should make strong assertions beyond what the facts will bear, but that we should carefully distinguish between what belongs to fact and what to faith. We see through a glass darkly. If we insist in speaking as if we could see without a glass and clearly, we shall not be speaking with precision. It will be the wrong sort of precision—that which Matthew Arnold satirised in the words : “Precisely so, precisely wrong.”

(2) It is often assumed that to make statements far beyond what the facts will warrant is a venial thing, and even a mark of faith, but that to fall short of the statements which are supposed to express the truth is a serious offence. But both are vicious ; and I think more harm has been done by over-statement than by under-statement, because over-state-

ment more readily passes into the conscience, and its error is less easy to uproot. We ought, indeed, to deal very tenderly with expressions of sincere belief, even when they seem to us exaggerated. But we ought also to deal tenderly with the faith of honest doubt, that is, the inability of a man to reach the point which we think just, when it is evident that sincerity and candid truthfulness underlie the doubt or even the denial.

It is assumed also at times that Church authority can make up for the lack of real grounds, and underpin, so to speak, the tottering fabric of dogmatic articles. But this is just a case in which a new statement of an old principle is urgently required. It is evident that expressions of dogmatic certitude by assemblies of bishops in ages quite different from our own have lost their power over thoughtful minds, unless (as with the Tractarian leaders) ecclesiasticism has from the first entered into the conscience. But, on the other hand, the living faith of simple and

sincere men and women will always be a great support to our own faith. We have to substitute the warmth of experience for the coldness of dogmatic statement. Who has not been uplifted by the verse of the *Te Deum*, "The holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee"? Who has not, in times of dejection and bereavement, felt the reassurance which is given by the true faith of his brother Christians in the love of God or in the eternal world? It is by processes like these, not by strong but cold assertions, that faith is fostered.

I come then at once to the central point in our forecast—the attempt, though in the merest sketch, to work out the future framework of faith, to show the result of the inductive method as applied to theology.

The old method was to climb up, by whatever means, at once to the assertion of the existence of an intelligent Author of Nature, and then to argue that He must have revealed Himself, and that it was proved by

miracles that in such and such cases He had made positive revelations. I think it much truer and safer to start inductively from the facts actually before us in life and history.

What is the greatest fact in the moral world? It is righteousness and righteous men. The only thing which might conceivably be set up as the rival of righteousness is knowledge. Yet one of the greatest leaders of scientific thought in England, the late Professor Huxley, constantly expressed his conviction that knowledge was far less important than character. I think it unnecessary to pursue this. If any one (and there are such men) disputes the pre-eminent importance of righteousness, I would ask him to show me a system of life constructed on any other principle. The attempts of Ingersoll or of Nietche to make will or self-assertion the basis of social life are their own best refutation. Those who have lived for anything else than righteousness have constantly admitted that their lives had been wasted. Even in the

midst of a career of pleasure or money-getting, or ambition, or a soulless acquisition of knowledge, men have cried out, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." And where men have derided a righteous man during his life, laying hold on some weakness or narrowness in his character, they have often, after his death, come to admire and mourn for him. The primary questions, therefore, with which theology will busy itself will be, What is this righteousness? and, How is it produced?

I. When the first of these questions is asked, it will be seen that the idea of righteousness varies at different times and in different countries, but that it grows clearer before the minds of serious men as the world grows older. It may be admitted that no man, and no time, has been wholly without righteousness; yet there are men, and even races, who have but a feeble sense of it. We must study the noblest characters, and must mark the growth of righteousness from age to age. But I think these three

characteristics of righteousness will be found most to emerge from long experience. 1st, The true righteousness is essentially self-sacrificing and loving. We may preserve the name of righteousness for working purposes, but we know that its inner spirit is a love for men which is constantly putting away selfishness, and devoting itself for truth and the good of others. 2ndly, This devotion to the good of men has a universal character; that is, it is not loving our friends and hating our enemies, but loving all whom we can reach, without making narrow distinctions and asking, Who is my neighbour? 3rdly, It is a righteousness which seeks to influence society generally, and has the hope of establishing the Kingdom of God among men.

The first of these characteristics, which identifies righteousness with love, we may specially study in the later developments of righteousness as compared with those of earlier times, contrasting Stoicism or Epicureanism or Pharisaism, the latest growths of the pre-



Christian world, with the altruism of our own time, which is present alike in the best theology of the present day, in Positivism, and in socialistic schemes. The second characteristic, that of universalism, may also be studied in the transition from ancient to modern times ; but it may be noted specially in reference to the general development of the race, being called forth by such facts as the Roman Empire which united all nations ; by moral revolutions like that in which Buddha burst the bonds of caste, or St. Paul embraced all nations in the Catholic church ; or again in the Missions of Mahometanism and more fully in those of Christianity ; in the struggles for the abolition of slavery ; or in the democratic politics of later times, which are grounded on the sense of the universal brotherhood of men. The third characteristic, that of the hopeful attempt to influence society generally, may be brought out in the contrast between East and West ; for the East, whether under Brahminism or Buddhism or Confucianism

or Mahometanism, has always tended to a cowering acquiescence in the existing order of society and of the world; while in the West we have seen the attempt made again and again, from the Greek Republics and the Roman Empire, through the Imperial and Papal system of the Middle Ages, and again in the modern states of Western Europe, to bind together classes and communities by a bond of righteousness and brotherhood. Thus, I imagine, the theology of the future will seek a strong and positive ground in the existence and development of righteousness; and the art which corresponds to this science, the art of good living, which is, in its various aspects, morality, social progress, and religion, will occupy itself in the furtherance of the righteousness which I have described, self-giving, universal, and inspired by hope.

I would note here two characteristics of righteousness which belong to a more esoteric experience, but which the biographies of

good men, which must be constantly studied, will bring out. One of these may be called Holiness, that is, the sense of reverence and of consecration. A righteous man sets before himself the ideal of goodness, and worships it, whether as an abstract idea or as set forth in some admirable character. He also appeals to conscience, not as the mere result of reflection on what is right, but as an authoritative power, the reflection of the power above him, whether he calls that power "the law," as the Buddhists do; or Humanity, as some Western systems do; or the order of Nature, as others do; or God, as the great mass of men have done. The obligations of friendship, Aristotle said, in criticising the system of Plato, must yield to truth; "for it is a sacred duty to give truth the primacy of honour." The power which is reflected in conscience is the supreme power, to which alone we owe absolute devotion.

The other characteristic of the higher righteousness is, that the man in whom it dwells is

never satisfied with himself. He is conscious of defect and of weakness. He craves pardon for what he has done amiss; he feels that he wants to rise to fuller knowledge, and for this purpose to gain the support of his fellow-men, and of the Power which he acknowledges above him. He feels, to use St. Paul's language, that he "falls short of the glory of God."

The question, then, as to the character of true righteousness will, we may apprehend, be answered by tracing a progress in self-devoting love, in universality, in hopeful application to social and political life; but with the acknowledgment that men are dealing with a moral power supreme and absolute, to which the conscience does homage, and in the presence of which they confess their faults and long for support and help.

II. The second question is, How is righteousness produced?

There were two methods to which the ancient world mainly trusted: the one was

habituation, the other, compulsory training. The first said, Begin acting righteously, and you will gain the habit of righteousness; so you will become a righteous man. The second said, Let the child be carefully trained, and let the man come under the dominion of just laws; so he will be habituated to righteousness. These are found alike in Aristotle, who systematised Greek philosophy, in the Pharisees, who systematised the law of Israel, and in the hard, stern discipline of Rome. But both the Platonist and the Hebrew prophet had a grander, a more inspiring method. Contemplate, said the Platonist, the idea of good, and so you will become good. Think of the righteous God, said the Hebrew prophets and psalmists; think of His love for the righteous, His hatred of wickedness and wicked men; He is the giver of the righteous law; He is your friend and your great reward. Perhaps the Buddhist approached in some degree to this when he spoke of the law as the source of rest and joy. But

the other Eastern systems, especially that of Confucius, seem to give no incentive to the formation of the righteous character. They tell men what is right; but it has often been felt that they rather dishearten than strengthen men, by presenting a law of goodness which is above them, and which no help is given them to reach. The common motives of praise and blame, the pursuit of glory, both present and posthumous, are felt in all systems, ancient and modern alike. But, if we are searching for those means of attaining righteousness which are most felt by the higher spirits of our time, we shall find, I think, that there are two; (1) The presentation of great ideals, especially the characters of great men, and the sense of the benefits conferred by them; (2) Sociality, the support derived from the presence and sympathy of others. We may find these two in Plutarch's *Lives*, in Carlyle's *Hero-Worship*, in Comte's *Calendar of Great Men*, in the brotherly feelings of democratic

equality, and in the whole bundle of facts which may be labelled with the equivocal name of socialism—facts which in some hands may appeal to violence or compulsion, but which more naturally appeal to the brotherly goodwill of our fellow-men. There is, beyond these, the constant sense of the overruling Power as being friendly and sympathetic; and the consciousness of progress, which bears us up, and bears us on, like some mighty and beneficent stream.

The theology, then, that begins by looking at facts will thus answer the question, How do men become righteous? As a fact, they are led in part by hope of reward and fear of punishment, by being trained by the rules of the home, of society, and of the state, by accustoming themselves to do right; but much more, in the more prominent instances, by dwelling upon the services rendered by others, and by the sympathy of their fellows; and they are supported in this by the consciousness that the Supreme Power in the world makes for righteousness.

It is not only by the observation of others ~~that~~ the inquirer must proceed. He must look into his own heart and experience. There, if our analysis has been right, he will find the same result. The ideal of what righteousness is, and the means by which it may be reached, will be the same in him as in those whose lives he has been observing.

I have in this enumeration said nothing as yet directly of Christianity or of God; and I have postponed these purposely, because a theology which is inductive and scientific must begin with the most clear and indisputable facts. But, if it is truthful, it must embrace all the facts, and prominent among the facts stand Christianity and our consciousness of God.

It is possible that the theology of the future will speak less of "Christianity" than we do. The name has become an expression for a host of ideas which will at least require great modification before they can be incorporated into the system we are tracing out. It means different things to different persons; it is not a Bible



word; and it has, in some places, such evil connections that in some of the Mission stations it has been discarded, and the disciples have been simply called brethren or believers. But the power of Christ can never grow less. "Christianity" has an earthly side, and this must decrease; but He must increase.

We must keep our minds fixed, not on systems, but on righteousness. We may say with St. John, "Be not deceived, he that doeth righteousness is righteous." It is not the name that is of importance but the fact, the character.

But if we ask, "What is righteousness as found in the experience of its votaries?" we shall find the answer returned by a vast number of those most entitled to our confidence: "I know no righteousness but that of Christ; if I have any righteousness, it is because Christ lives in me." If, again, we ask, "What is the standard of righteousness?" then these men will reply (and John Stuart Mill thought they could not adopt a better standard), "What

Christ did, and what we believe He would wish us to do, that is our standard of righteousness." If, again, we seek for inspiring examples, how can we pass over that which has for nineteen centuries been the main source of self-renouncing love, the story of the Cross? Or if we look for companionship as a mode of maintaining the life of righteousness, what companionship has ever been so sustaining as that of men who, in sight of the Cross, have said to one another, "Let us live together in the faith and love of Him who died for us"? And this is not a wilful or sectional righteousness. It is human goodness in its simplest and broadest aspect. Christ seeks, not to make us Christians in any sectarian sense, but simply to make us what men ought to be.

Men may possibly come to the belief that many things said of Him by His votaries have been extravagant, idolatrous, beside the mark, contrary to His own teaching, and liable to obscure God instead of leading men to Him. They may possibly conclude, as some have

done, that His perfection is relative to the time when He lived rather than absolute. I think we must admit that this is possible. But I do not believe that the consciousness of His moral supremacy can ever grow less. I believe that the spirit in which He lived will be the inspiring power of all generations to the end of time : for it combines truth and love ; fervour with reasonableness ; simplicity with dignity ; human frailty with calm facing of death ; religion with morality ; positive commands with the most far-reaching suggestions ; the care of individuals with grand views of the ingathering of the nations ; respect for all local and special phases of religion with the teaching that God is a Spirit, and that neither in one place nor another is He to be worshipped, but everywhere in spirit and in truth. It combines all these in so perfect a manner that it seems to meet exactly the moral wants which we feel every day, and to give, equally to the simplest and to the most refined, the very support which they need. And there is nothing wilful about it : it is divine in this

sense pre-eminently, that it is not a set of opinions, but that it brings men back to truth and to nature.

We spoke, moreover, of the personal power exerted by righteousness. This power and action is the motive force, the central source of energy. It is this which makes Christianity not a philosophy but a power. Christ's personality continued in the world by the company of those in whom His spirit dwells is the chief means by which righteousness grows and prevails.

We observed that all the highest morality had in it the element of consecration. This, too, forms a special feature in the righteousness of Christ. He was pre-eminently the Holy One. This consecration to truth and to God is essentially what is meant when sacrificial language is used about Him. We may take the words of the prayer in John xvii. as expressing this: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified by the truth,"—that is, I consecrate or offer myself for

them, so that they may be brought in like manner to offer up their wills and their personalities to God in sincerity and truth.

I have pointed out that in all the truest righteousness of man there is present the sense of failure, and of being in the wrong; and consequently of a need of forgiveness and restoration. In the life of Christ there is present, no doubt, the sense of weakness, which leads to constant prayer, and to the declaration that the Father is greater than He. This is the germ of that which in us, when wrong has been done, turns to contrition and repentance. But in Christ there is no consciousness or confession of wrong. On the contrary, there is a sense of mastery. It is as one who has overcome, and as one who can lend support to others, that He speaks to us; nay more, as one who is in possession of truth, and so represents the truth that He may be said to be the truth itself, and who can therefore invite men to come to Him and lean upon Him and He will give them rest. This, I think, will be a fixed point in the theology

of the future; it will recognise the character of Christ as the realised ideal of righteousness.

I think that the more all the chief moral phenomena of the world are weighed, the more the central position of Christ, both morally and historically, will become clear. And, even if nothing more were capable of being known, if we had to confine ourselves to this life without any knowledge of God or of immortality, we should call ourselves Christians: Christ, we should recognise, is our leader in righteousness. He is more, our Master and Lord. Further, when we see how the power of His life and death have wrought upon the world, and been the means of new life to individuals and to society, we shall gladly adopt the name of Saviour. We recognise Him as able to lift up both us and all men out of selfishness into self-sacrificing love, out of degradation into honour.

The first and central point, then, as it appears to me, for Christian thinkers is to estimate truly

the moral supremacy of Christ, of His teaching, of His righteousness, of His self-sacrificing love. This is the true interpretation of all the assertions of His divinity : for that which a man acknowledges as supreme over his conscience is his God.

This leads up to the doctrine concerning the eternal Father ; and here, too, we need a change of method.

I repeat that, even if we left out of account both God and immortality, we should be Christians still in a very real sense. But can we suppose that the Christianity of the future will be thus limited ? I see no reason to think it. If at times it seems as if a kind of Christian Agnosticism was to be the religion of the future, this is, I think, because of the dull, unlively manner in which the belief in God and immortality has been presented ; and it is because in the Agnosticism of the present day I find that what is distrusted is not the essential doctrine but the particular modes in which it is conceived or presented,

that I believe the theology of the future will gain in assurance as the mists clear off.

Let us realise the facts of our position. We live in a world, of which by far the most important phenomenon is human righteousness. But this righteousness is not stagnant, but progressive. If we look back upon the long vista of past development, we see a gradation and an upward movement, from the atom to the organised structure, from movement without life to living organisms; and then the ascending series of living forms, from the mere germ to the plant, the animal, the man. But the development does not stop there; for man's history has been one of constant progress, and the progress has been that of right relations—that is, of righteousness. What is more, men have only by degrees, and very dimly, become conscious of this progress, or felt that righteousness was its goal; and yet, the world is so constructed that they have been pushed along this path involuntarily, and those who have been aiming only at wealth or power have



unconsciously furthered the real progress—that of right relations and right dispositions. For instance, a strong race has dispossessed a weak one. They have done it through the lust of power or of gain; but the result has been that the world becomes more habitable and more civilised. Or different classes have contended in the State, each wishing to gain its own ends; but the result has been constitutional government. Or again, there has been oppression, but it has given rise to patience and self-abnegation. Or, to take the supreme instance, men consummated the death of Christ; but this, the greatest of crimes, causing the direst of sufferings, has resulted in untold moral benefits to mankind.

I dwell upon this unconscious progress in righteousness, because it appears to me to be the most convincing proof that the world is not going at random, as might sometimes appear, but that there is design or purpose in its arrangements. It is true that the old "argument from design," as put forward by writers

like Paley, gave too much the idea of a mechanical process. God was the workman who fashioned the world from without, as a watchmaker fashions a watch. This seemed to demand either that, once started, the world is left to go of itself, or else a constant interference in its material arrangements. Yet it is quite evident that when I say "God made me," I do not mean that God took clay and formed a human shape, and put life into it. The process of human development is well enough known. Each of us is aware that he was at one moment an infinitesimal piece of matter, which, however, had life within it; and that, by assimilation of material, by workings within itself, by nourishment flowing into it, this particle of matter developed into the man or woman capable of thought and of love. No reflecting mind could be content with a mechanical theory of divine agency. But does the abandonment of such an idea of design make us less conscious of the unseen power which guides the

world, or of its characteristics? I do not think so.

The question then is not, as it used to be stated, whether there is a God or not; but this—given the facts, how to account for them. Given the Kosmos and the spirit within it or directing it which makes for righteousness, how can we best express the facts? How can we characterise this mighty system which is above and around us, and out of which we have sprung?

The world in which we live is instinct with life. This life is endlessly diversified, yet it is harmonious. The world is one. It is a Kosmos, not a Chaos. The life in it is suited to its environment; so that the effort to live and to grow finds the conditions around it agreeable to its needs. In the struggle for life the fittest in the main survive. This is not, as has sometimes been said, a tautology; the “fittest” does not mean merely that which best fits its environment, but that which best fits the general development of life, such as experience

teaches us to expect it. And this is true throughout the whole range of life. It is the more useful members of a race, which, for the most part, reproduce themselves, and thus there is a gradually ascending series, not in uniform and direct progression, yet with an unmistakable drift towards efficiency, virtue, true relations, righteousness. These are facts which it is almost impossible to gainsay. One like Matthew Arnold, who could not tolerate the so-called argument from design, and was never weary of saying that we cannot prove a personal God, a God who knows and loves, yet contended that the drift towards righteousness was as certain from experience as is the fact that fire burns. We are entitled to assert as a distinct fact that the world is made for righteousness; and to righteousness men, whether willingly or unwillingly, are surely impelled. There is no need to raise a conflict between the scientific view and the spiritual view. We are all in the same ignorance, and have all the same interest in giving a right

answer to the question. If we take Herbert Spencer as the type of an Agnostic, we find that he acknowledges a vast eternal Power, to which all religions bear witness, but declares that we can know nothing of it. Yet surely, I repeat, if in ordinary matters we judge of a power by what it does, we have a right to characterise the Power by which the world subsists, the Power from which our own life comes, with its moral ideas, its aspirations, its consciousness of perfection, the Power of which the life of Christ is the supreme product, as a Power of justice and holiness and wisdom. There are some, like Tyndall, who have declared that the life, which we now see in this later stage of development, lay hid in promise and potency in the primeval atoms. But this is scarcely different from the assertion of St. John, that through the Word all things were made, and nothing without Him ; that is, that there is no period so remote and no scale of being so low, but there is that in it which irresistibly tends towards the highest life. There are some, again, like Huxley, who say

that the living soul is certainly not to be identified with the material through which it acts, and may at least possibly exist apart from it, and similarly that the universal Soul may be entirely separable from the material universe, while yet they do not admit that anything which we know makes us certain that it is so. Darwin himself, indeed, after many hesitations, inclined to the conclusion that our faculties are not such as to be able to pronounce on such matters. We need not be staggered at these hesitations in men of science; and we shall do well to remember that some of the greatest Christian teachers have confessed that we cannot know or define God as human and worldly things are defined. St. John himself said, "No man hath seen God at any time;" and he shows what is the guide to such knowledge as we can have: "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him."

On the other hand, the thought of our time has been coming round, it seems to me, to a

spiritual view of man and of the world. This is well expressed in an article which was written by the late Mr. John Addington Symonds in the *Fortnightly Review*.<sup>1</sup> Reviewing the progress of thought during the last fifty years, starting from the discoveries of science, Mr. Symonds declares that the great feature of the progress of thought has been to restore the spiritual view of man and of the universe. "We are mind," he exclaims, "and in the last resort nothing but mind ; and logic compels us to expect mind in that system of the universe of which we are an integrating element, and from the total complex of which we cannot be dissevered." And again he says: "I venture to assert my conviction that it is the destiny of the scientific spirit to bring these factors, God, Law, Christian morals, into a new and vital combination, which will contribute to the durability and growth of rational religion."

Materialism is no longer in question. The idea that spirit and personality is only a kind

<sup>1</sup> No. ccxvi. (N.S.), June 1887, pp. 892, 893.

of adjunct or property of the bodily frame may be dismissed : it has given place to the belief that the spiritual being is the essential thing, and that the bodily frame is only its expression. When, therefore, men reflect upon the law and order, and what I think we rightly call purpose, apparent in the conduct of the world, I feel sure that they will not be contented with any explanation of it short of that which acknowledges a living God as the centre and pervading power of the whole ; “ One who ever lives and loves,” by whose will all things stand fast, whose righteousness is the cause of our righteousness, into communion with whose thought and purpose it is our privilege to rise. It is thus, I think, rather than by such processes as those of Paley, that we may best set before men the righteous Father of our spirits.

The other great affirmation, that of immortality, goes with this. It is impossible to think of God as conscious and fatherly without accepting the argument of our Saviour : “ God is not a God of the dead, but of the living ; for



all live unto Him." He has known us and made us His fellows. We are His sons and are made in His image ; for we certainly spring out of this " universal Whole " of which He is the inspiring power ; and we can estimate it as a whole and enter into the purposes of Him who directs it. We think His thoughts, and are inspired by His righteousness. How can we imagine that, when our earthly tabernacle falls away, we shall ourselves fall into non-existence ? I have no doubt that the somewhat materialistic form under which the doctrine of the resurrection has been taught will disappear. It will no longer be supposed that these decaying bodies, of which the particles are dispersed after death, will be brought back into life. The permanence of the personality, under whatever form it may be (for " God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him "), is what is really meant by the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, whether in the case of our Lord or of ourselves. This, we may well believe, involves mutual recognition, and with this we can be

content. The scene which is behind the veil will be necessarily undefined. But the mountain half-seen through the mist forms a not less impressive background. We see through a glass darkly. We are saved by hope. Hope is certainly not the same as precise scientific certitude, and it has been a mistake in the old theology to attempt this scientific certitude on such subjects. But hope is a very real, perhaps the most real, power in human life.

I think the theology of the future will content itself with a few great affirmations; and it will guard strictly the fence which separates the different degrees of assurance. But the elements of faith or trustfulness and that of hope can never be excluded from the grounds on which we build. We acknowledge that faith is not sight. "What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" But faith will argue: It is impossible that we have been so constructed as that we may after all have been deceived. The strength which good men have derived from the assurance of God's

love and the hopes of immortality cannot be in vain. The noble lives which live in our affections cannot have passed away. If a few strong men and philosophers declare that they can live on a mere balance of probabilities, yet the multitude of plain men and tender women and simple children cannot; and of them is the kingdom of heaven. It is the children and the childlike whose angels always behold the face of the Father. I say, such trustful and hopeful thoughts cannot be put aside. They are part of our nature, and of its better side. They are rightly suppressed or even scoffed at when they assert what real knowledge shows to be false. But, where knowledge opens the door, they are in their right when they come crowding in, and fill the space within with light and joy and love. And this spiritual buoyancy becomes its own vindication. As St. Paul says again, "Hope maketh not ashamed." It grows, not by loud professions substituted for inquiry, but by the stimulus which it gives to all that is good and tender in our nature, by the uplifting of our

spirits into a region beyond the reach of pessimism, a region where hope is constantly transmuted into energy and heroism. In this way we may expect that faith, untainted by credulity, will operate in the theology of the future.

Theology, as has been pointed out above, needs simplification ; it must be content with a few great affirmations. It was often said by the late Master of Balliol that God, Immortality, Righteousness, these three, are alone indispensable. Does this mean, then, that all other doctrines will be put aside, and the whole apparatus of creeds, confessions, articles, be branded as useless or as pernicious ? or again, that the whole church life of public prayers and ceremonies, and the modes of regulating these which go by the name of church government, will pass away ? By no means. But two things will be demanded in reference to them all. The first is, that they are not to be imposed upon us compulsorily, *en bloc*, as all alike valuable, but to be esteemed—the doctrines

according to their degree of importance and of probability, the forms according to the aid which they afford to the practice of righteousness. It will be felt that the real field of expansion for theological thought lies in the application of these great central affirmations to human feeling and the conduct of human life ; and that the true ritual is that "reasonable service," of which St. Paul spoke, the service of self-dedication and the care of the brethren, especially the weak and the poor. The second condition of all theological affirmations will be that they mean something moral, that they are connected with that righteousness and love on which hang all the law and the prophets, and the New Testament and the Church as well. I propose in concluding this sketch to show how these conditions will affect some of the best-known Christian doctrines.

I will begin with those which formed the centre of the older creeds, the Divinity of Christ, and the Trinity. In the first place, the theology of the future will not rake up the embers of old

controversies, and bind upon men's consciences documents like the Athanasian Creed, which are almost unmeaning to any one who has not entered into the controversies of Arius, Sabellius, Apollinaris, Nestorius, Eutyches, and many others. These will be felt to be matters of the past, suitable for antiquarian study, but not responding to modern wants. The question as to the Divinity of Christ will be this, "Can I trust absolutely to His character and teaching? Can I be assured that, in attaching myself to Him, I am giving my allegiance to that which is supreme, absolute, divine?" I have no doubt that the answer will be in the affirmative. But the way in which this will be shown will not be by citing particular texts, or the decrees of councils, but by pointing out the relation of Christ to the scheme of righteousness in which we have recognised the purpose and the action of God. Nor will the affirmation itself be that of a theoretical view of the Godhead, but the assertion of moral supremacy. Since God is the

Spirit who works through the whole creation towards a righteous end, then He lives especially in man who is capable of righteousness. There is a divine element in every man; we are all the sons of God, and all, in our degree, show forth the character of God in whose image we are made. How much more then, when we perceive Christ to be the crown of the whole development of the human race, are we justified in saying, Here is God manifested in the flesh?

The assertion of the Godhead of Christ stands firm. But it must be interpreted primarily (I do not say exclusively) as a moral rather than a metaphysical fact. He is morally supreme; the Lord of the conscience; the true representative in human life of that Love which is divine, of the God whose nature is love. But this manifestation of God is not found in Christ alone. We have God in the creation and in general providence; we have God manifested in Christ; we have God speaking in the conscience: yet these three speak to the same result. This, I think, must be the demonstra-

tion of the Trinity in Unity in the theology of the future, conformably to the central principle of righteousness.

I do not feel sure, however, whether in the expression of Christian doctrine the word Trinity will be found largely serviceable. We have to guard against its becoming a puzzle, a ground of pride to some and of alienation to others. In any case it must be set forth not so much as a matter of exact knowledge, but rather as expressing the mystery, the immensity, the incomprehensibility, and, if the word may be used, the sociability, of the Godhead. But great care must also be taken to give it a moral direction, to show that what it means to us is, that neither in science nor in history nor in life are we apart from the righteous God ; and that we must not so exalt one sphere of the Divine action as to abase another, but acknowledge all the manifestations of the Righteous One to be co-eternal and co-equal.

I will take next two doctrines connected with the Church life and organisation, Episcopacy



and the Sacrament. "Can we imagine," so it may be asked, "that with all the vast questions brought before us by the theology of the future, Episcopacy can be anything but a little question of form?" But if our system is one of righteousness and of life, then all questions of government become matters of importance. The laws of society are divine laws; and to discover the true principle of government is to discover God's will. I think it must be admitted that the true law of society is to have one head, who is responsible for the conduct of the whole system. This, no doubt, does not require many things which have at times been deemed essential to Episcopacy. The actual succession by imposition of hands must be deemed a matter rather of fitness which helps us by its witness to historical continuity, and is to be accepted thankfully where it may be had, than of absolute necessity. In some of the Eastern churches it is not used: Priests and Bishops are ordained by breathing. And the question whether the head of the system of Christian

worship and beneficence should be in office for life or temporarily, and whether he should be alone or the first of the presbytery ; or again, how far his personal discretion should be controlled by laws or by a council ; and further, whether the congregation or the city, the parish or the diocese, the province or the Church as a whole, is to be treated as the starting-point of organisation, or as its final term, must be decided according to good sense and circumstances. The bishops in early days in the towns formed a presbyteral council, as among the Philippians, to whom St. Paul wrote, " with the bishops and deacons " ; or as in Alexandria (according to Jerome, who regarded them as a body of presbyters who chose one of themselves to preside) down to the third century ; in country parishes the bishop was simply the minister of an independent congregation ; and it was not till the ninth century that, by the aid of the false decretals, the diocesan system fully prevailed, and the chorepiscopi or country bishops were fully brought under the bishop of

the city. Nor will Christian trustfulness allow men to forbid new modes of worship or of beneficence which may independently arise, and in many of which the right principles of government are certainly recognised. The divine principle of government in short will be looked for, not in some authoritative statement of the Bible or tradition, but in that which God in His providence has shown us to be necessary for the progress of the Christian community in righteousness. It must also be asked whether, in a system which is one of public righteousness, rather than one confined to public worship and its adjuncts, the title of Bishop may not be extended to all the chief administrators of the Christian community, and not only Independent Ministers or Presbyterian Moderators or Methodist Presidents be reckoned as Bishops of portions of Christ's Church, but Judges and Mayors and Ministers of State, who are presiding agents of systems of Christian righteousness, be esteemed as truly successors of the Apostles.

Similarly, the Holy Communion must in

our teaching be allied with righteousness by showing the relation which it implies to our fellow-men as well as to our Lord; we must dwell much more than we have been in the habit of doing on that which was its original intention, and which is supreme in St. Paul's teaching about it,—I mean its social aspect. It must be the typical meal, involving the sanctification of the common meals which are the centre of our natural life, and the means of binding Christian societies together in remembrance of our Lord. To eat the flesh of Christ will mean to nourish ourselves on Him, and realise His indwelling as the constant sanction and aid to true righteousness. Thus we may believe that, in the theology which looks to life and righteousness, the Lord's Supper will hold at least as high a place as it now does; it may possibly, in future days when faith has become the centre of social life, be celebrated at our ordinary meals, as in the first days they "broke bread at home" (Acts ii. 46, R.V.); it will certainly be the chief feature of gather-

ings of families, and of guilds and societies ; not necessarily (but only on special occasions and for the sake of good order) administered by particular persons in particular places, but forming the constant pledge of Christ's indwelling in our society and of the impulse which He gives us towards righteousness.

Thirdly, I will take the two great doctrines, which came specially into prominence at the Reformation, and have been upheld by evangelical Christians at all times—the Atonement and Election. Their difficulties are greatly lessened, if not altogether removed, when they are looked at from the side of their bearing on human righteousness.

The Atonement or At-one-ment means the reconciliation of man to God, and, as some say, varying the phrase, of God to man. Many theories have been started at different times about it; but we must estimate them all by their bearing on our principle that God is righteousness and love, and that the attainment of this righteousness and love is the end of all religion.

We have seen that the true righteousness is self-sacrificing love, and that this is revealed in its fullest form in the death of our Lord. But our Lord's self-sacrifice "draws all men to Him"—"constrains them," as St. Paul says, "to live no longer to themselves, but to Him." Here is our reconciliation to God. We are made righteous by the faith which unites us with the righteous Christ—"That just One," as St. Paul called Him. I think that this will be enough for us in our teaching, and that questions as to the mode in which we may suppose this sacrifice of love to have wrought on the heart of God, and disposed Him to us, will hardly be asked. But if they are asked, they are not hard to answer; for, if we realise the power of Christ's death over the hearts of men, much more must God have realised it: in the sacrifice of Calvary He must have beheld a world returning in repentance to God and righteousness.

The doctrine of Election will similarly be viewed by the theology of the future, not

through the medium of happiness, but through that of righteousness, the true righteousness of self-devoting love. It is a fact which we cannot gainsay, that we see some called to this righteousness, while others are not similarly called ; and we can only impute this to God's election. But what does this imply ? Not favouritism, but primacy or priority in Christian labours, as Christ showed to the Sons of Zebedee, when they asked for a primacy of show, and He gave them a primacy of suffering. Take it thus ; that God has called or predestinated us who believe to be conformed to the image of His Son, that is to work and suffer for the good of others ; that so far from others being passed by, the very object of our election is that we may bring them in, and that there is a hope that all may be at the last numbered with God's elect in glory everlasting ; and you see how a doctrine which has been thought to be the most repulsive in the repertory of theology is really both in strict accordance with facts, and also a true and inspiring view of God's dealings with us.

Lastly, I take two doctrines about which modern theology has been much exercised, Miracles and Eternal Punishment. I think that the theology of the future will either discard the word miracle, which is found in none of the creeds or standards of the Church, or will use it in the more general sense in which it is used in Scripture, as implying wonderful events, which strike us, and manifest to us vividly the presence and power of God. It is quite a modern idea that such events must be a contradiction or suspension of ascertained law, and such an idea is rapidly disappearing from the views of Christian Apologists. Whether all the events which are commonly called miracles can be accounted for by the ordinary working of natural law (allowance being made for misapprehensions or Oriental hyperbole in the accounts which have come down to us); or whether, as I think must be allowed in the case of many of our Lord's miracles of healing, we are to acknowledge the presence of laws, the working of which has not yet been



fully understood, is a question for reverent and scientific research. But it does not interfere with the impression which the events themselves are calculated to make upon us. The plagues of Egypt, the passage of the Red Sea, the sustenance of Israel in his desert life, the thunders of Sinai, the deliverance of Israel from his enemies, when the sun was silent (Josh. x. 12, margin) in the darkness of the great hail-storm, and when the stars in their courses fought for them; and again the birth of the Redeemer in the fulness of time in fulfilment of the prophetic hopes of Israel, the removal of weakness of mind and soul and body at His presence, the revelation of the heavenly world in His resurrection from the dead—even if we take the resurrection as a purely spiritual fact—are all, apart from consideration of their relation to physical laws, parts of the process by which God has schooled mankind into righteousness, and imparted His love and His glory to men. They will come home to men with fresh force at each epoch of history, and make them say,

"This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." - The controversy about miracles will be put aside in our teaching, because men will acknowledge in all striking events of our day, as much as in those of ancient times, remarkable and concentrated examples of that which is always present to us, the providence, the indwelling, of a righteous and loving Father.

So we may believe the question of Eternal Punishment will be solved with constant reference not to pleasure and pain but to righteousness. The righteous God cannot leave us unpunished. His fatherly chastisement must be used to bring us back to Himself. On the other hand, if His righteousness is a love which imparts itself to men, and seeks and saves the lost, we cannot suppose that it can cease to work till its task is fully accomplished. He cannot allow a state of sin and rebellion to be perpetuated in a world in which love is enthroned. We must believe that, to the theology of the future, Eternal Punishment will mean a process of restoration through

suffering; which is eternal in the sense that God's wrath can never cease to burn against the sin which has alienated His children from Him, but must go on until His purpose of love has been fully accomplished.

It will be seen, I hope, we have been able to give to all these doctrines, by starting from the central idea of righteousness, a sense consistent with the laws of nature and of morality; and this is their true sense, the thing which good men really meant, whether in ancient or modern times, when they coined these expressions, though they may have expressed themselves in strange paradoxical language. If the theology of modern times acknowledges the nature of God as being above all things righteousness and self-sacrificing love, then it must view all the doctrines about Him and His dealings as descriptions of His righteous character and of the means by which He is impressing His righteousness upon mankind. The question present in men's minds will always be, not, What are the literal words of the Bible or the

creeds? but, What can we reasonably understand to have been meant in reference to this self-manifestation of eternal righteousness and love? How will this or that doctrine stand when translated into actual life? When we apply these tests we shall find that the essential meaning of all the great Christian doctrines is moral and helpful. And then theology will be once more a great power, the mistress of all the sciences, explaining each new phenomenon supplied to it by the specialist, and fitting it into its true place in the universal order, searching for the purpose of divine righteousness in all phases of life, and giving men a clue which will guide their thoughts and quicken their energy for discovery and for progress in all spheres of intellectual and practical activity. This does not appear at present, because the unreal methods of the past cling about us, and make men search for metaphysical and ecclesiastical propositions instead of a moral and spiritual life, and look at the letter of Scripture instead of appropriating its living power; and thus, because of super-

ficial difficulties, they overlook or reject the dawning truth. But let the dust of controversy clear away, and let men be in earnest to know the divine righteousness by which they are to live, and let them learn, as they are learning, to trust one another more fully as the sons of God ; and then theology will be the most real of all objects of study, a light upon the path by which mankind mounts upwards to know and share in the eternal life of righteousness and love, and to transform the world into a kingdom of God.

IV

THE CHURCH AND NATIONALISM

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## THE CHURCH AND NATIONALISM

### *The Power of Party Spirit.*

PARTY spirit binds into a compact organisation men who are separated by class or by pursuits. Party spirit is powerful to make individuals subordinate their views to the common view. Party spirit commands the gift of leisure and money and friendship. Party spirit enables leading minds to carry out their plans of reform and bring about results.

If the object of life be the attainment of some definite and known result, there is no better means to attain this object than party spirit. Jews and Samaritans, for instance, were alike concerned to keep their nations distinct. Their object was something definite and known



—the purity of their own race and worship—and they were well advised to foster the party spirit which forbade any dealings one with the other.

But our Lord rebuked this spirit, and by His teaching the world has learnt that another spirit—charity—is worth more than success or the attainment of any object however good it may seem. Professor Clifford gives the same lesson in other words when he says, "The good at which we aim is doubtful, but if we do anything less than the best to get the good, this evil is undoubted." Browning has written *Balaustion's Adventure* with the same moral against those who "mindful of the eternal purpose miss the immediate earthy link."

Party spirit may thus be the best means to secure home-rule or union, temperance or purity, education or any other good ; but if party spirit increases bitterness and pride, then, both by Christ's teaching and modern experience, the end does not justify the means.

The temptation to use party spirit has been

and is very great. The end in view seems so clearly the best end, and the appeal to that mixture of pride, loyalty, and prejudice of which party spirit is compounded meets with such ready response. The Church of England, for instance, is constantly regarded as if it were a party in the nation, and its objects are advanced by the same sort of methods and appeals as are used by Liberals and Tories or any rival parties. A newspaper is said to be necessary "to support Church interests." Churchmen are urged to beneficent action lest "they be outstripped by dissent." Bishops beg for £100,000 to build a Church House "in order to give expression to Church life," and every day Societies to promote Education, Emigration, Temperance, or Relief, appeal for funds on the ground that they are "Church of England."

*Gain by Party Spirit.*

The result of such policy may be success. The Church as an organisation is doubtless stronger because it has newspapers devoted to

its interests, and there is probably some increase in the help given to drunkards and children and the poor because Churchmen are provoked into activity. The results may be great, but the question remains whether a stronger organisation is worth the pride and jealousy it has provoked to gain its position, or whether a converted drunkard outweighs the uncharitableness which follows the rivalry and "the out-stripping" by which his conversion has been accomplished.

Christ came to make His own the kingdoms of the world. He was offered success if He would worship Satan—use, that is as Caesar used them, the weapons of force and policy. He refused; He was crucified, and is the foundation of the eternal kingdom.

The English Church, too, has been offered success: "I will give thee the greatest place, I will make thee a shelter of waifs and strays, I will raise thee to be victor over drink, if thou wilt use, as politicians use them, the ways of party." The Church has yielded. It is taking the place of a party; it uses the

motives and stirs the passions of party. It has success; but success is not in the Christian table of weights and measures. Long subscription lists, Government favour, church building and church services, a large communicants' roll,—all are as nothing unless there are also increased humility of mind and increased love among neighbours.

*Loss by Party Spirit.*

Party spirit wins success for religious organisations; but as it fosters pride it cannot increase humility of mind, and as it stirs competition it cannot increase good-will. Every critic therefore points to the pride or the bitterness of rival religious denominations. The secular press makes merry over the uncharitableness of the religious press. Humanitarians declaim against the intolerance of Christians. The spiritually-minded are sore at heart as they are conscious in religious circles of a spirit which has in it more of war than of peace. Religion in England is indeed suffering from

just those evils which party spirit produces, and yet religious bodies seem to see no way of progress except by the development of the same spirit. The Church of England every year organises itself more and more as a party. The nonconforming bodies offer their success as evidence of what competition can do, and claim that the Church should be deprived of the advantages which make the competition unfair.

*Distinction of a National Church.*

The object of this paper is to suggest that a National Church rightly understood may protect religion from party spirit.

*The Church of Christ.*

The Church of Christ is the whole company of the faithful of all creeds and countries and classes. Its extent is known only to God, but its existence is known to all the children of God. All men, that is to say, who are conscious of their relation to a higher will than the one

they follow, are conscious also of a society in which that will is done. They feel that somewhere, somehow, their life is hidden in a community where their real selves are free; that heaven lies around them, that this kingdom is not far off. This society, this community, this church is invisible, and no man can say of Catholic, Quaker, or Deist that he is or is not of the Church. But of this invisible church man acknowledges or invents visible forms, which help to lift him above the pressure of the present. These forms, however, claim only to approximate to the invisible church. The Roman Church is constituted of baptized persons who admit the authority of the Pope. The Baptist Church of those who are baptized as adults. Other churches of those who are converted. A National Church regards the whole nation as the church—as, that is, one visible branch of the invisible world-extending society in which Christ is King. All these churches are means by which their members are lifted above the dust

and steam of the world's ways; the tabernacles to which they retire to find their real selves.

*The Church as the Nation.*

The English nation is thus the English Church. Englishmen irrespective of creed and class form a society which for them is the best representative of the faithful in Christ. The society is Christian, as one in which for two thousand years Christ has been preached. Christ's spirit permeates everywhere, and His teaching affects all civil and domestic relations. The secularist print which calls on its readers to put mercy before sacrifice, the atheist leader who is bold to do justice, the law which draws in children to comfort and educate them, the public opinion which considers the poor,—have all been taught of Christ. The visible society can never do more than approximate to that invisible society where love reigns; and if any one, remembering the unhappy divisions in England between rich and poor, between

luxury and starvation, between sect and sect, resents the assertion that the nation represents the Church, let him ask humbly whether any so-called religious society offers a more worthy representation. What thought of what society so stirs men's minds as the thought of England? Is any community of the "baptized" or "converted" so inspiring? Evils exist, blots which stir shame and passion, but behind the evils and blots is an England in which Christ is King—where for the sake of duty men give up profit; where for the sake of others they tax themselves to educate the children and heal the sick; where principle rules in trade and love in the home; where men have the charity which believeth all things and hopeth all things. England has stood for justice and given her strength for liberty. It is because England is so full of light that its dark places are so evident.

The nation is the Church, therefore it is that the Common Prayer-Book is a law of the land, made by a Parliament representative of the



people, and only to be changed by the same authority ; therefore it is that the Bishops are appointed by the Prime Minister, who himself holds his office at the will of the people ; and therefore it is that every parishioner is entitled to vote in the election of a churchwarden, and is by law a member of the Church of England ; therefore it is that the wealth of the Church is vested not in a corporation but in the nation ; therefore it is that the Queen in all causes ecclesiastical as civil, is supreme. The English nation may be viewed as a society of men and women who accept the law of Christ and represent on earth the perfect society of heaven. The nation so viewed is the Church, and in this capacity it has one organisation, endowed, ordered, and controlled by itself, for teaching and for worship.

This statement may be supported or denied by arguments from history. Volumes have been written on what our fathers thought and did and meant. But arguments from history have not much weight with people face to face with

a present need. A man who must escape from a burning house will not wait till it has been decided what sort of fire-escape his father used ; he will take that best fitted for his purpose. English people to-day who are anxious to escape from the pressure of the present, and to be lifted into the society of their true selves, will not wait till it has been decided what church best helped their fathers to realise "the to be" ; they will take that which seems fitted to their purpose.

*Radical Questions.*

The questions therefore to be answered by those who hold that the nation is the Church are : "*Is it practicable for the nation to organise itself for worship ?*" "*Is such an organisation well fitted to produce the humility of mind and the love of others which are characteristic of the Church of Christ ?*" There will be a loud "No" to both questions. "The Established Church," it will be said, "exists only by the weight of its antiquity, with an

organisation which has no justification in the eyes of practical people ; and as for humility of mind and toleration of others, commend us to the Church for examples of pride and narrowness."

The "No" which condemns the Church of England is loud ; but Mr. Lecky, looking in his calm way over the map of life, has no such condemnation. He recognises the difficulty of reconciling old forms with changed conditions of human knowledge and the facility with which this has been done in the Church of England, where many old beliefs have been displaced, while the structure remains unshaken. He shows by example piled on example how within it are to be found men whose opinions can hardly be distinguished from simple Deism, and men who abjure the name of Protestant, while the Church as a whole has every sign of corporate vitality and plays a powerful part in English life. It draws to itself some of the best intellect of the country ; it keeps itself thoroughly in touch with cultivated lay-opinion ; it greatly influences

education, and is still the nurse of spiritual life. Its tendency is to enlarge the circle of permissible opinion, and its variety is accepted as an element of strength rather than of weakness. Mr. Lecky's account of the English Church as it is, might indeed form the basis of an argument to prove the superiority of a national organisation.

The question however is, not whether a church organised three hundred years ago meets present needs, but whether such an organisation is practicable to-day and likely to be helpful.

*The Answer.*

The facts which meet those who set themselves to answer the first question are (1) a new consciousness of nationality ; (2) an established system of worship closely knit to national life and endowed with great wealth ; (3) the existence of differing opinions as to religion.

The strongest of these facts is the national sense. The people are English before they are Sacramentarians, Evangelicals, Episco-

pallians, Presbyterians, Deists, or Secularists. They have in their mind's eye an England which is holier than even the ecclesiastical system which has been handed down from generations and is hallowed by familiar and beautiful forms. They believe in their nation for just those qualities for which the denominations stand. There is no Sacramentarian or Secularist who, contending for his truth, would not allow that England in her dealings and aspirations has represented that truth. Is that truth intimate relation with God? Has not England been sent to do God's work? Is it justice between man and man? Has not this been England's policy? There is now a larger common faith than when the Church of England was originally settled—there are more of the chief things of life in which there is agreement. The standard of conduct is higher and more generally accepted. There is more respect for differences of opinion and a greater sense of mutual responsibility. The general level of intelligence has been raised, the claims

of duty are more widely acknowledged if not more obeyed, and a noble and unselfish career is held in the greatest estimation. The sense of nationality, the faith, that is, in the unity which is made up of order-loving, right-doing, truth-seeking Englishmen, is gradually and surely overwhelming all other differences.

*Members of the Nation as Members of the Church.*

If now it be sought to apply the established system of worship with its historic buildings—its resources for worship and for teaching—so as to express the relation of this nationalism to the invisible society hid in God; if, in other words, it be sought to organise the nation as the Church by means of the existing resources, who in the nation can be forbidden a voice in deciding how the buildings and the wealth may be used for worship?

There may be tares among the wheat, but the principle laid down was "Let both grow till the harvest"; and if any one now were to root up any body of Englishmen with the

High Church, the Low Church, or even the so-called Christian spade, he would probably root up wheat as well as tares. There is no way by which the members of a Christian nation can be divided so that only those who are Christians may assume control of the organisation for teaching and worship. The Deist may be a better Christian than the Catholic, and the prisoner who has served his time higher in God's sight than his judge. All the people share the national unity.

*Examples of Changes which might be effected if the  
People fitted old Forms to present Needs.*

It ought not to be beyond a statesman's resources to discover a way in which all might express their sense of this unity in a religious form. The wealth, for instance, which has been set apart for worship might be redistributed. Sums of money might be taken from districts from which the population has removed and given to crowded districts. Offices which have ceased to have duties might

be abolished. Buildings which are national might be put under national control. The people in different parishes might be authorised to determine what uses within the law should be adopted in these churches, and given a veto on the appointment of their ministers. These, however, are details. If once it were accepted that the people as members of the nation could order the organisation of worship they would become interested, and shape the details as ideas occurred and needs arose.

*A Possible Future.*

It is not possible to forecast the process of development, but the future may fairly be imagined. The forms of worship will then under such a system be varied so as to suit various minds. There will be services in which colour and motion are prominent, and there will be services to suit the most Puritan tastes. The art of to-day—its music and its painting—will be used to express the thoughts of to-day. The knowledge



of to-day will inform the minds of the teachers, and the pulpit will no longer be behind the press. The holiest and best will be called to the ministry, driven forward by the Spirit which is always reaching out to something better, and no longer checked by barriers erected by timid theologians.

A visitor to a parish finds now a church which is in the hands of a man who may possibly be working himself to death to save the people. He is not their officer, and his is not their church. The visitor finds also some chapels and mission halls which are also energetically worked, and are the property of a few. The mass of the people are not sensible that either church or chapel is theirs—expressive of the common life they enjoy and of the national ideals to which they aspire. Their church—be it Anglican or Non-conformist—is expressive only of some narrower life and ideal. A visitor, however, to a parish where the church and the chapel have alike come under the parishioners' control, where

the preachers are of their selection, where the various forms of worship have been arranged to suit the different needs of different people, where the truths of religion have been attached to home and business and pleasure, will be likely to find a much more general interest and much greater consciousness of relation to a Society hidden with Christ in God.

*If practicable, is it advisable ?*

The thing is practicable—the highest life of the nation, which is not to be found so much in old religious forms and societies as in national ideals and aspirations, could be expressed in modern religious forms. But beyond practicability there is the further question as to advisability. Is one nationally controlled organisation the best means of developing humility of mind and love of neighbours? A church is founded on earth not only to represent the Invisible Church and bring to wearied men a reminder of their true home, but also to fit men for life in that home. A church is as

it were a voice by which people express that faith, and is also an agent by which they increase their faith. It helps its members to realise their larger life, and at the same time enlarges their present life. A national church, a nation organised for worship, might be the best symbol of the Invisible Church, but is it so well fitted to guide, to comfort, and command as a church energised by sects?

*Greater Effectiveness of a National Organisation.*

1. The controversy from one point of view practically ended when the nation undertook national education. The sects strove with much devotion to build schools, but it was found that they left many children untaught and more ill-taught. The nation took up the duty, and hardly any one questions the rightness of the action. The nation has command of resources; it is able to meet the needs of poor and neglected districts; it is able to control the tyranny of patronage and to make common what is found to be best. National

education since 1872 has lifted the whole nation on to another stage.

The various religious sects may in the same way strive to teach humility of mind and love of others; but there must be districts which will be neglected or patronised, there must be much left undone which larger resources could do. The success of competition assumes demand, and there is no demand where there is greatest need. The ignorant do not demand the teaching of the higher life, and probably resent that which is imposed by richer neighbours. The rich on their side when they choose a teacher for themselves hardly choose one whose teaching makes them uncomfortable. The Gospel has always to be given away. If a national organisation has been found best fitted to provide teaching for children, it follows that a national church is best fitted for teaching grown people when, like children, they do not demand what they need. It has ample resources so as to be independent of patronage;

it is responsible for the whole population, so none are neglected ; it is in touch with the varied thought of the time, so no one set of opinions gets the predominance. A national church to accomplish its purpose must of course be under national control ; it must reflect the highest common thought, and not that of one set of thinkers ; it must consider the interest of the whole, and not of any section of the community. Such a national church may not be within the experience of the last century ; but such a church is, as it has been shown, within the reach of practicable politics, and such a church would have the advantage as a teaching force over other bodies depending on wayward enthusiasm.

*Mutual Benefit to Church and State.*

2. There is, however, another advantage in a national organisation which is even more valuable than that of efficiency. Close contact is set up between religion and politics. The authority which makes laws, which decides on

peace or war, which directs education, becomes also the authority which is concerned for the promotion of humility and love. The work of the State is done in an atmosphere of religion, and the work of the Church in the atmosphere of business. The State loses if its interests be entrusted to men on the ground of their cleverness, as the Church loses when its interests are entrusted to men on the ground of their goodness. There are abundant signs of such loss in both departments. In State affairs a spirit of arrogance and selfishness has made itself felt. Politicians are found supporting claims which have no place in that Invisible Church in which they profess belief. They work the common machinery for private interests ; they worship force with its ritual of military show ; they act as if there could be no peace save in supremacy ; their trust is in boasting and sometimes in lies ; their gospel is that of aggression. Political opinion is far below national opinion, and men do for the State what they would not do for their business or their homes. Its

influence has lately done much to corrupt the idea of patriotism, and men who in their hearts are proud of England's moral greatness have been led to speak and act as if their pride were in her power, her wealth, and her size.

In Church affairs, on the other hand, there is a spirit of indolence and content which is fatal to its usefulness. Methods of business current generations ago are still in vogue. Vast resources are wasted or ill administered. Officers incapable through age are left in responsible positions. Opinions and practices universally accepted are forbidden by old formularies. Services and uses adapted to the needs of other ages are enforced on an age which has been almost re-created by discoveries and by means of intercourse.

Politicians are proud and assertive. The people as members of the State are militant, arrogant, exciting the antagonism of foreigners. Churchmen talk as teachers out of date, and the people as members of the Church do what they condemn in business and assert

what they deny in practice. One authority actually controlling State and Church would tend to make the State religious-like and the Church business-like. Parliament is now indeed nominally such an authority. But for many years it ceased to take any interest in adapting the Church organisation to the growing national life. Religious parties meantime grew strong, and Parliament, dreading the passions which discussion arouses amid those parties, now shrinks from any Church legislation.

There is in name one authority, but in practice the affairs of the State are in the hands of a body professedly careless of religion, and the affairs of the Church drift without any guidance at all.

*Parliament's Neglect of Church Organisation.*

If, however, Parliament had kept pace with the growing national sense of duty as it kept pace with the growing national sense of rights ; if it had reformed the ecclesiastical organisation



as it reformed the political organisation ; if it had fitted the Church to express national ideals as it fitted the Constitution to express national demands, Parliament would not now seem such an impossible Church authority. Perhaps as it comes to be recognised that the strength of the nation lies not only in its armies, in its laws, or in the health and wealth of the people so much as in that higher life which is represented by humility of mind and love of neighbours ; perhaps as it comes to be seen that religion is not the interest of rival sects but the means by which the higher life is nourished, Parliament may again be held as responsible for the care of religion as for health and wealth. Men will then be elected not only for cleverness' sake but for goodness' sake, and the people, as English people, will no longer be proud of their country for her greatness or for her wealth, but for her surrender of her power to justice and of her interests to liberty.

The point of the argument is not, however, that Parliament can resume the control of

State and Church, such action depends on the movement of a Spirit beyond human control. The point is that the State which has to organise the nation as a church is more likely in its political action to adopt the laws and customs of the invisible kingdom of God, and that the church which is organised by the State is more likely to be efficient. A number of eager missionary and voluntary organisations may presumably do more to help people's aspirations and lead them to the knowledge of God, but they would not as the one national organisation spiritualise politics. When the chief governing body is defender of the faith and responsible for its expression, that body is more likely to make laws and declare war in humility of mind and in consciousness of other needs.

*A National Church and Party Spirit.*

The position, however, from which this paper has started was that the conception of the nation as the Church would limit the growth

of the party spirit which is condemned by Christ. A national church being such as it might be, and such as has been suggested, would obviously have this effect. That which is the whole has no need to assert a party's rights. The members of the Church being also members of the nation would have no need to develop Church feeling for its support.

There might indeed be parties—parties to promote certain views—and such parties might be inspired by party spirit, but the Church itself would not derive any of its power from such a force. People would have different expressions of belief and different forms of worship, but they would all alike be Churchmen. Bishops when they called on people to do the duty implied by their relation to God would not then have to work on party spirit. Russia offers a present example of a nation which is also a church. The example may deter more than it attracts; but it is to be remembered that Russia is the youngest of the civilised nations, hardly yet two centuries old; that its

religion is still mingled with an undue amount of superstition; that its people are ignorant, and that neither government nor church is under popular control.

The Church nation does therefore insist on a narrow orthodoxy, and does persecute dissenters, but at the same time Russian politics are religious—more subject to idealism than that of any other nation—and the Russian Church is an efficient instrument, independent of party support. Russian writers who believe in Russia claim that as that nation takes a place in modern civilisation she by her experience will solve many of the problems. "Ours," says the Russian, "is the twentieth century." The identity of Church and State is one of the lessons Russia proposes to teach a world sadly in trouble because of the religious difficulty.

But enough has been said to show that a national organisation for worship is practicable, likely to be efficient, and independent of party spirit.

*Not Organisation but a new Spirit.*

The readers, however, of this paper as they read it must feel as the writer feels as he writes it, that organisation is a small matter. Machinery cannot create a religious sense, but a religious sense will create machinery. These discussions of organisation and of ritual are like the discussions about the clothes of a man that is dead. Not indeed that religion is dead, but it is for the moment asleep. People are not going about their work conscious of an intimate relation with God; they have not the awe of those who walk in the presence of the Almighty, and they are not set to do the will of Him who showed Himself on earth as one who served. Religion is not a power in the world, and it cannot be claimed that such an organisation as has been described in this paper would make it a power. What is to be done? How will the dead bones be stirred? These are questions serious minds are ever considering, but they are not within the scope of this paper.

The practical conclusion of all that is here written is that the nation, being the church, the people—as English people—should be given power over the organisation which is established to provide means of worship and teaching.

It may seem a far cry from the popular control of a church and a minister to the establishment of a holy nation. It may not be recognised how if the parish or county council is concerned in ecclesiastical matters the people will become more humble in mind, and more considerate of others. There may indeed be at first trouble instead of peace—the strife of parties—the use of religious watchwords at elections—the bitterness of theology. But, in time, the growing spirit of toleration, which under present conditions has done much, would do more, the popular bodies would then respect differing opinions and provide different forms of service. This is all that can be said; but in an atmosphere where order reigns, the Holy Spirit always finds some voices, and sends out some

lives to convince the world of righteousness, of sin, and of judgment.

All that can be done by this generation is to make order by adapting old machinery to new developments, and as John the Baptist did, turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.

V

THE FURTHER REFORMATION  
NEEDED

BY THE REV. BROOKE-HERFORD, D.D.





## THE FURTHER REFORMATION NEEDED

THAT great struggle of religious reformation which came to a head in the work of Martin Luther was one of the grandest movements in history. It set free the human soul, set it free to a new religious life, spirit to spirit with God ; set it free to study the Bible for itself, free to study all light of human thought, as it had not been for many a century. Like all human movements, indeed, it put its strong points too strongly. For instance, it made too much of the mere letter of the Bible, and emphasised justification by faith as if therein was the whole solution of the problem of salvation. When the Protestants fell back from reliance upon the direction of the Church to resting

on the Bible, Catholics said, But how are you to interpret the Bible? The Bible is nothing, mere confusion for you, unless you have an infallible authority to interpret it. To which the Protestants made reply that the Bible itself was its own infallible authority. In order to support this they put a stress wholly unknown to antiquity upon verbal inspiration of the Bible ; and the Bible has suffered ever since from this extreme literalism in the idea of its inspiration. This is equally true with regard to salvation by faith. Catholicism had laid too much emphasis upon works—almsgiving, penance, payment for indulgences, and so forth—leaving almost out of account the spirit or faith at the heart of the works. Protestantism, in its reaction against this Work-holiness, set up a doctrine of faith which was almost as one-sided at the other extreme—making, not only ceremonial works, but all work unnecessary, and flouting practical religion as of no account in salvation. Notwithstanding, in the new fervour of the Reformation, there was so strong a mental

and moral impulse that at the time this one-sidedness was comparatively little felt, and on the whole, the movement was great, life-restoring, life-giving.

The worst of it is that the Protestant world has been living on that Reformation ever since. Instead of carrying forward its principles, the Churches have mostly been trying to crystallise and perpetuate its results. What Luther and Calvin reached, in the working out of their principles of religious life, has been held up, not as an encouragement to go farther, but as a signal where to stop. Calvinistic Trinitarianism became the religion of the Reformed Churches, from which they have never been able to get quite away. The doctrine has varied a little here and there; indeed, the specific Calvinism has almost entirely evaporated; but still it has been held to as a sort of sacred thing, which it has been counted dangerous to examine. Even those who have diverged from it have kept maintaining that they have gone very little from it, and that it

is substantially the same thing they hold. You know what that thing is. The reformers started with the idea of going back to the Christianity of Christ, but they only succeeded in going a little way behind the mediæval schoolmen, shall we say to the Christianity of Augustine? One God, in three persons; man, originally made perfect, but fallen in Adam, and ever since wholly ruined, incapable of good, coming into the world already doomed to hell. The whole system rested (in Luther as in Augustine) upon a passionate sense of utter sinfulness; the only hope being a sort of ready-made salvation purchased by Christ upon the Cross, and available for every one who would simply believe that Christ had accomplished this. This fairly describes the Christianity reached by the Reformation, and an enormous improvement, too, upon the Christianity of the Papacy! Better by far the tremendous spiritual realities of a heaven and hell settled for all, unalterably, by the decrees of God, than the washed-out theatrical

terrorism of a purgatory from which men found all sorts of ways of escape by indulgences and priestly negotiations. Better by far the open Bible—however strained by the idea of a verbal inspiration which made its least parts as divine and binding as its greatest—than the *ipsa dixit* of “the Church,” with the Bible kept from the people and left to moulder on the monastery shelves. As long as men really had the Bible, they possessed the fountain of reality and life ; as long as men had the Gospels to read for themselves, they had the touchstone of Christ's own simple thought to try all doctrines by. Thus the Christianity reached by the Reformation (with all its Calvinistic narrowness and hardness) was a great improvement upon what had prevailed before ; and especially as interpreted by the great reformers in their intense earnestness. It was a mighty improvement ; but still, only a stage on the way to truth, and for the Churches to have gone on living upon it ever since is unworthy. My point is that the time

has come when the Churches cannot live on it any longer. Indeed there has been constant gradual change from it already. At every point along the line of that old Reformation theology there has been a shading down of the old hard lines. The old phrases are kept, but the emphasis is very differently put. The old word Trinity is still used, but the real emphasis is not upon the threefoldness but upon the unity,—on the great thought of “God”—simply “God”—the one infinite Spirit,—and even those who pray to Christ as God do not think of Him, for the most part, as one of three persons in a Trinity, but simply, it is in that tender Christ-image that they seem to feel the one infinite Spirit most real to them. So, again, they keep up the old Reformation phrases of man's ruined nature and utter corruption, but they do not believe them as they used to. Original sin is softened down into a general dwelling upon man's actual sinfulness, which is true enough; and instead of dwelling upon man's utter powerless-

ness and helplessness as they used to do, the strongest preachers of to-day in "orthodox" Churches preach the Gospel of trying, and working; of practical righteousness, as the requirement of God, almost as much as we "Unitarians" do. So they still talk in a general way about heaven and hell as of old, but they do not preach *hell* as the Reformers and Puritans did. They no longer dwell upon the few who will be saved, but upon the many, and declare that all might be. In fact, it strikes me that the Churches keep up the creeds and doctrines of the Reformation much as here and there in old halls and homesteads you see hanging on the walls the old matchlocks which once did good service in the struggles of the Commonwealth times. They are fine, interesting old weapons, and they look well over the fireplace, and they show that those who keep them there come of a strong and staunch old stock, but nobody thinks of firing them off now. Or, if ever men *do* occasion-



ally take them down to show that they could still be fired, they put a great deal less powder in them than they used to do.

It is the perception of this state of things existing around us which makes me feel that the time is come for the Churches that specially claim to be the Churches of the Reformation to take another strong, open step forward. At present they do not do themselves justice before the world. They are not standing upon their really best thought and faith. They go on allowing themselves to be supposed to represent ideas and principles which really they have passed beyond. They let themselves be held responsible for charges of narrowness, of illiberality, of putting creed before conduct, of being afraid of science, and the like, which are not really true of intelligent people in any of the Churches. And it is not they only, nor their particular Churches only, that suffer. The whole cause of Christianity and Religion altogether suffer. I used to be especially struck with this some six or eight

years ago when Colonel Ingersoll was going about the United States lecturing against religion. He drew immense crowds by his wit and humour, and by holding up the old Puritan and Calvinist ideas—of heaven, and hell, and the devil, of the fall of man, and of salvation by belief alone. Then he took the poorest parts of the Bible, assumed as the very words of God; shook them to pieces, made them ridiculous, and produced upon multitudes the feeling that religion altogether was discredited and destroyed. The fact was nothing of the kind: but the Churches had only themselves to blame for that impression. He was really travestying, not the thought and faith of to-day, but the hardest and extremest statements of the faith of two or three hundred years ago. Then, when men protested against the injustice of it, he used to say: "I take your own statements; if you do not hold them, say so!" I never felt so strongly the mischief that has been done to religion by that old attempt to crystallise the Reformation at what Luther and

Calvin had reached ; I never felt so strongly the need of a further frank, clear movement forward on the lines on which real living and thinking people have moved, and are moving to-day.

I wish to speak as emphatically as possible about this broader and freer attitude, as existing already in the deeper thought of all the Protestant Churches, because this will show you that in speaking of a new step of reformation being needed, I am not meaning this in any small sectarian way. I am not meaning that *our* particular opinions are the reformation needed, or that what is wanted is that people should leave other religious bodies to come in with us. What I specially feel in the present day is, that many Churches are ripe for a new step of reformation, not in accepting our thought, but in being faithful to their own. If they would only take in public the stand that we constantly find those individuals who compose them taking in private—that of itself alone would be the beginning of a new re-

formation which would be of infinite moment to the religious life of the world.

But I will leave these generalities. It may be asked, What does all this come to, or what actual results do you think it should come to? I think we have a general sense that the great door of freer life for the human soul thrown open by the Reformation was, by and by, shut to again, and has ever since been kept as nearly closed as possible by all sorts of small ecclesiastical limitations, and that now it wants opening again, and those limitations clearing away. That is the general idea; and as for the special directions of this freer life, I think they may be summed up in three brief phrases: freer thought; more open speech about what is thought; and wider fellowship among those of different thought.

The first thing needed is freer thought; fuller, freer inquiry about all these great subjects of religion. We are doing injustice to those vast realities towards which man's soul is for ever reaching out. We are letting our

attention stop short at the various statements men have made about them, instead of letting our heart and thought go freely and wonderingly out towards the realities themselves. It wants to be seen and frankly admitted, what vast, solemn subjects these are: that infinite life that we call "God," and this deep mystery of our own and all human "life," and that greater life to come which stretches away with such illimitable possibilities in it. How small, when we really try to conceive of these things, do all men's statements about them seem—so infinitely inadequate, at best only shadows of the things themselves. Does that mean that all such statements and creeds are therefore contemptible and to be thrown aside or burned up as rubbish? Not for a moment. Those great creeds of the past have been the clearest statements that great souls here and there could shape into human words of how the great divine realities did verily seem to them; and they were elevated into "creeds" because they did verily help the men of this and that time

to some larger, more living thoughts of such divine things, than they had before. But then, here has been the error, that in elevating them into creeds, and grouping their Church life about them, succeeding ages took them, not as openings towards higher further thought, but as limits of thought, restrictions upon thought. In reality, every creed that even the wisest theologian could frame, should have been, not a limit, but a point of departure. Perhaps that should be the keynote of the further reformation—not to abolish all the old creeds, but distinctly and avowedly to put them as points of departure, not limits to thinking, but helps and openings to further and higher thinking. Because it is not merely permission to think that is needed, but encouragement to think. There has been a good deal said at times about “the right” of private judgment; there wants a higher view held up before men—the “duty” of private judgment! There wants clearing away all that notion which has so embedded itself in much

of even the most earnest Christianity since the Reformation, that thinking is rather a dangerous process unless it be done on some very clearly established line, and within certain well-marked limits. It is not less thinking, but more, the world needs. Study this great fact that all human consciousness, as soon as life has risen to the real human level, has also felt some dim sense of other, higher life, and shaped itself into a thousand forms of groping faith, and kept rising here and there to nobler levels of great religions. Study the great Scriptures of the world with fearless industry; study the Bible with its marvellous unfolding of an ever higher light, and, most of all, study Christ, in whom life and thought are alike at their very highest and purest. Study all light, in history, science, everywhere where there does seem any glimmer of light on this vast infinite, not nothingness, but life, which touches *our* life on every side. What I ask for is freedom for this, encouragement to this, the clear glad acknowledgment that instead of this

being dangerous, it is the only safe thing, the very thing man was made for—this is the very first element in the further reformation needed. Such freer inquiry will not necessarily lead to all the old beliefs being given up; if, such thinking confirms them, well and good; yet even, then let them not be set up again in the old position as limits, but ever more as openings. Again, we see, it is not that the creeds want altering a little here, patching a little there, or this one putting in place of that. That is what is so hopeless in all this talk we hear of this or that Church “revising its standards.” We do not want the theological line that men should to-day put a little forward from where it was three hundred years ago. We want the giving up of all such lines, the frank acknowledgment that they were merely records of how far men had got; with an ever open outlook towards light and truth, and closer, fuller realisation of life with God.

The second point in the further reformation needed is closely allied to this freer thought,



viz. more open speech. You see the need of this being emphasised when you recognise how, even of the freer thought already existing, so little is frankly uttered. I have spoken of how many (I believe it is true both of ministers and people in the old Reformation Churches) have got quite beyond the old positions, and yet they always seem anxious to have it supposed that they are standing just where their fathers stood. That is why—as I have already put it—the Churches are not doing themselves justice, not doing justice to the highest truth which is really stirring and working among them. There actually is far more reasonable and lofty religious thought than ever comes out, and what does come out emerges in hints and in discreet silences rather than in clear, earnest, open speech. An old Methodist friend of mine, who used to talk things over with me in the most perfect freedom many years ago, once said: “The real trouble with all these creeds and standards is not that

they make us say what we don't believe, but that they keep us from saying out some of the very best things we do believe." That wants reforming. There wants freer speaking. Let it be reverent speaking: I believe that the more speech is left free the more it will be reverent: the thought which is kept down is apt to break out at last in violent and irreverent extremes; but this reformation is essential: franker and fuller discussion of the great, deep thoughts of our time.

The last note of this needed further reformation—or at least the last that I can treat of here—is wider fellowship. The old plan, which the Protestant Reformation rather intensified than otherwise, was that all should think just alike, or at least profess to do; and any one who had a different thought must keep it to himself; and then these, thus thinking alike, must be hedged in, all by themselves; not for the world listen to any other teaching; and let no teacher into the sacred enclosure till he had been "passed" as up to

the old mark. Of course men never could be kept together : so one and another split away, and gathered into some new grouping of Christian life ; and hence all the variety of sects and all the opprobrium which has been cast upon Protestantism for its inevitable tendency to break up into sects ; and hence, too, all the sadness and self-reproach which Protestants have vented on themselves about their divisions. Now the sadness and the opprobrium and the self-reproach are wholly without ground. The subdivision of Christian life into these different groupings has not been a sign of death, but of life. The harm of it has not been either in men holding different thoughts, or in their grouping together for their regular work and worship, according to their common thoughts ; but in the unbrotherly estrangement and separation among those thus differing. Let that be done away, and there is no more harm in men forming distinct associations for their religious life than there is in their living in "self-contained" houses. One great part of

the reformation needed is not to contrive some broad platform on which all may stand and ignore their differences, but a more brotherly drawing together, with all their differences recognised. The best men in almost all Churches are already feeling this. Why should they associate with men of all sorts of belief through the week, and on the Sunday, in their religious life, keep rigidly separate? Nay, they have begun to find out that it is specially interesting now and then to spend an hour with thoughtful persons of different views, instead of being always with those who think the same. Especially is this good for the cause of truth. It is not public discussion that helps the truth, so much as thoughtful and friendly comparison of different views, in quiet personal intercourse.

In these directions especially is the further reformation needed to-day: freer thinking, freer out-speaking, freer and wider fellowship. Surely there is nothing sectarian in advocating these things. These are larger than any

"ism," either this or that. It is by their readiness for these that all our "isms" will have to be judged. "Broad church"-men, in many sects, are trying already to have these principles of freer thought and life prevail in this or that Church, but what one wants most of all is to see them recognised and acted on by all Churches.

Then I believe that the divine and simple religion of Jesus Christ would come forth in a new beauty and take hold of our modern world with a new power. The world craves still, as much as ever, a living faith. The developments of civilisation and the discoveries of science are wonderful indeed, but they leave the deepest life in man untouched, unsatisfied, restless still with the old questionings of duty and of destiny, and the old thirst after the living God. There, in the spirit and the word of Christ Jesus, is the answer that has given the human heart at once most strength and most repose. Let but that spirit and word be freed from the misunderstandings of a dim past, and

from the fetters of a timid present ; only let the energy which has been spent in elaborating creed be concentrated on elevating life, and once again that spirit and word of Christ —“the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever,” shall come to the longing heart of man with the old inspiring, uplifting, saving power.



VI

THE RELATIONS OF THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND WITH MODERN  
NONCONFORMITY

BY THE REV. R. E. BARTLETT, M.A., LATE FELLOW AND TUTOR  
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## THE RELATIONS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND WITH MODERN NONCONFORMITY

THE late Master of Balliol, in writing of the expulsion of the Nonconformist ministers from the Established Church on St. Bartholomew's Day 1662, says: "That was the greatest misfortune that has ever befallen this country, a misfortune that has never been retrieved. For it has made two nations of us instead of one, in politics, in religion, almost in our notion of right and wrong; it has arrayed one class of society permanently against another."

Whether indeed it would have been possible at that time, as Mr. Jowett seems to have thought, to unite in one communion the dis-

sident elements of Protestantism, the Arminian and the Calvinist, the maintainer of Infant Baptism and the maintainer of Believers' Baptism, the wearer of the surplice and the wearer of the Geneva gown, those who clave to and those who abhorred the cross in Baptism, the ring in marriage, and the kneeling posture at the Lord's Supper, is a doubtful — perhaps a more than doubtful — question. For in matters of religion it is not the deepest and most important subjects that really interest ordinary men. To fight under Christ's banner against sin, the world, and the devil is a difficult but an unexciting work; but to fight against Prelacy, against Nonconformity, against "usages," against liturgies, is a form of religion more congenial to the natural man, whether he be Presbyterian or Prelatist or Brownist. Very few men in the seventeenth or in the nineteenth century have been able to rise to the serene heights of Baxter in his old age:<sup>1</sup> "I am much more sensible than ever of the necessity

<sup>1</sup> *Baxter's Life and Times*, book i. part i. p. 126.

of living upon the Principles of Religion, which we are all agreed in, and uniting these ; and how much Mischief Men that over-value their own Opinions have done by their *Controversies* in the Church ; how some have destroyed Charity, and some caused Schisms by them, and most have hindered Godlyness in themselves and others, and used them to divert Men from the serious prosecuting of a holy Life ; and as *Sir Francis Bacon* saith, that it's one great Benefit of Church-Peace and Concord, that writing Controversies is turned into Books of practical Devotion for increase of Piety and Virtue." And therefore, much as we may wish that men in the seventeenth century had been able to grasp the idea of diversity in unity, yet we must acknowledge that the Church was not yet sufficiently penetrated with the spirit of Christ to understand that not agreement in doctrine but love of God and of the brethren is the true uniting principle, and that to bear with the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves is better than

to endeavour to force men into a mere unity of profession.

It may be worth while at a time when theories of Church Reform are in the air, and when at the same time there is a lull in the Disestablishment agitation, to consider calmly what are and what ought to be the mutual relations of religious bodies in England. It is impossible to do this without some reference to past history, for the existing conditions are the result of an evolution which has been going on for three centuries; but we may touch briefly on the past and hasten to discuss the present.

As has been already indicated, the Restoration was the great critical moment in the history of modern English religion. It was then that Protestant Nonconformity<sup>1</sup> for the first time stood as a separate organisation out-

<sup>1</sup> Although *Nonconformity* has assumed of late a positive connotation, it of course originally denoted simply the refusal to conform to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England. Thus we find frequent mention of "Popish Nonconformists"; and in the present day those who "go nowhere" would in strictness rank among Nonconformists.

side the National Church. For from the reign of Elizabeth to the Restoration, few of those who were dissatisfied with the existing Church arrangements thought it necessary on that ground to separate from the Church; their object was rather so to modify the existing arrangements as to secure for themselves an acknowledged position within the Church. The Calvinist wished to make the Church Calvinistic; the Presbyterian wished to establish Presbytery; the Independent wished each parish to be organised according to the Independent scheme. Up to this time, the idea of the Church of England as consisting simply of the Christian people of England had not faded out of the minds of men; now for the first time Nonconformity, not merely as a revolt within the Church but as a separate religious entity, became an acknowledged fact in the social life of England. In the words of Dr. Arnold,<sup>1</sup> "Hitherto the Puritans had been more or less a party within the Church: the dispute

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 318.

had been whether the Church itself should be modelled after the Puritan rule or no; both parties as yet supposing that there was to be one church only as there was one nation. But first the growth of Independency during the Civil War, and now the vehement repulsion by the Church of all Puritan elements from its ministry, made it but too certain that one church would no longer be co-extensive with the nation." Dr. Arnold himself indeed never ceased to cherish the ideal of a church co-extensive with the nation; but the logic of facts has pronounced against it.

It seemed for a moment as though James II. might succeed in forcing all Protestants into union against a common danger. The conduct of the Nonconformists in refusing to be drawn in by the King's specious offer of toleration was the more admirable, because it would for a moment have been a signal triumph over the Church, and the Church had deserved no consideration at their hands; but they remembered that though they were Nonconformists they

were first of all Protestants, and they made common cause with the Prelates, and James to his chagrin found himself confronted by a united Protestant nation.

It might reasonably have been expected that when the Revolution had, by the co-operation of the Nonconformists with the Anglican Church, placed a Protestant monarch on the throne of these kingdoms, and had thus secured the Protestant succession, the relations between the Church and the Nonconformists would have been sensibly improved, and the Anglican Church might have been ready to make some concessions to those who were for the most part unwilling Nonconformists. But when the danger was over, the old spirit of rigid exclusiveness returned; of the two Bills brought into Parliament for the relief of Dissenters, one, the Toleration Bill, granting freedom of worship though not without restrictions, became law with little opposition; the other, the Comprehension Bill, abolishing subscription to the Articles and substituting a declaration



approving the doctrine, worship, and government of the Church of England, and enabling Presbyterian ministers, on condition of not reordination but imposition of Episcopal hands, to hold preferment in the Church, was shelved and allowed to disappear.

Since that time Nonconformity has held an acknowledged place in the religious life of England. Like the Established Church, it has had its periods of deadness and revival; prosperity and wealth have not been without their influence upon its life; the dulness and decorum of the eighteenth century, its dread of "enthusiasm," its Johnsonian solemnity and respectability, went far to assimilate the externals of Nonconformity with those of the Establishment; the published sermons of Dissenting divines might have been preached—probably were preached—in Church pulpits; the dividing line between the Church and Dissent was social rather than theological. The Evangelical Revival tended to obliterate religious distinctions: the Evangelical rector

was more in sympathy with the Nonconformist minister than with the hunting, port-wine-drinking, pluralist parsons whom he met at Visitations. It would have seemed to him the height of absurdity to hold that Episcopal ordination established a closer bond of union than Evangelical belief. Indeed, in the early part of the present century, little stress was laid upon Apostolical Succession; the Church was to be preferred to Dissent, not because it was governed by bishops—for indeed the Hanoverian bishops for the most part had little about them suggestive of the Apostles—but because it was established, and because to refuse to be of the King's religion was like refusing the King's coin and setting up a private mint of one's own. But in the second quarter of the century a new and powerful influence began to make itself felt. The agitation connected with the Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Bill affected not only the political but also the ecclesiastical atmosphere. Church Reform was in the air: the Ecclesiastical Com-

mission was appointed; bishops were advised to set their house in order; it was felt that a Reformed Parliament might show scant respect to an Established Church. What was to be done? It was impossible to surrender the claim to superiority, and to acknowledge Non-conformists as members of the same army though of a different regiment. It was felt that the State might at any time claim to regulate the doctrine and discipline and worship of the Church. Was it not possible once for all to place the Church in an unassailable position, in which its spiritual supremacy should be independent of State recognition? Was not the theory of Apostolical Succession, a theory which though little heard of in the eighteenth century had always been latent in the Church's armoury, exactly what was needed to make the Church a power no longer subordinate to or co-ordinate with the State, but supreme in her own proper province, and that the highest of all? Cardinal Newman has left it on record that it was the dread of

the rising power of Liberalism that first turned the minds of the Oxford leaders to what is now known as the High Church theory—the theory that Episcopacy is the divinely instituted and therefore the only legitimate form of Church government, that the Episcopate is the one authorised channel of divine grace, and that therefore all religious communities outside the pale of the Episcopal Church are, if not out of the reach of God's grace, yet without a lawful ministry and without valid sacraments.

It would be foreign to the purpose of this paper to discuss theories of Church government; but it is necessary to take note of the fact that Apostolical Succession, which in the last century was a private opinion handed down chiefly from the Jacobites and Non-jurors and quite without influence upon the general thought of the Church, is now the dominant theory among the clergy, and is laid down as an article of faith from thousands of pulpits. This fact must of necessity in-

fluence the relations of the Church towards Nonconformity. For however much Christian charity may promote kindly feeling and even religious sympathy between men of various denominations, yet if we make Church organisation the essential and indispensable bond of unity, there can hardly fail to be on the one side and on the other a sense of separation which renders any but a very guarded intercourse difficult. It might therefore at first sight appear that the present is an unfavourable time for urging any nearer approach of Churchmen and Nonconformists to each other. No doubt this is so, so far as any approach to organic union or even federation is concerned. No one in his senses would think of inviting Nonconformist ministers to seek Episcopal ordination, or of proposing any scheme of formal intercommunion: such a scheme must be the result of better understanding and of a deeper sense of inner unity. But there are ways of promoting unity which do not require the sanction of Convocation or of the Congre-

gational Union, but which may none the less be worth the consideration of those who long for unity but dread any crude attempt at uniformity.

We cannot but recognise with thankfulness the fact that many prejudices have died a natural death, and that a much better understanding exists between separated bodies of Christians than existed in the first half of the century. The admission of Nonconformists to all civil offices, the increased contact of Churchmen with men of all shades of religious belief and no-belief in the Universities, in Parliament, in municipal Corporations, in the Civil Service, at the Bar, all this has gone far to reunite into one what the late Master of Balliol called two nations, and to make men feel that though it may be good to be a Churchman or good to be a Nonconformist, yet it is better to be an English citizen. When two men have worked together on a Town Council or on the Governing Body of a School, though one of them may be a Liberal and the other a

Conservative, one a Churchman and the other a Baptist, they will find that they have common ground and common interests apart from their ecclesiastical differences ; they may even find that the atmosphere of secular life is more healthy and more bracing than the atmosphere of the Church or the Chapel. And coincidentally with this, there has undoubtedly been an advance, theological, æsthetic, social, in the various Nonconformist bodies, which has brought the foremost of them fully into line with the highest English culture. Rural Nonconformity is probably pretty much what it was fifty years ago ; but in the more stirring life of the towns the most influential both of congregations and of ministers are those who are advancing with more or less rapidity "after the new world," and whose denominational peculiarities both of phraseology and of doctrine are disappearing under the powerful solvent of modern culture and modern literature. An outward and visible sign of this advance is patent to the eyes of all in the new and costly

buildings which are everywhere replacing the old and obtrusively ugly chapels in which the Dissenter of the early part of the century gave expression to his conception of the simplicity of the Gospel. The new churches—for the modern Nonconformist has forgotten that his grandfather would have suffered martyrdom sooner than he would have given the name of church to anything less spiritual than the congregation of believers—are formidable rivals of the parochial churches. Gothic of a somewhat florid type, elaborately carved capitals, marble columns, stone pulpits, painted windows, “kists o’ whistles,” have supplanted the old red brick conventicle, with its sash-windows and its mean arrangements. Nor is the change in the worship less remarkable. A powerful organ to play voluntaries and lead the psalmody, a carefully trained choir, canticles and anthems, and the Prayer-Book Psalms chanted in a style of which a cathedral choir need not be ashamed; prayers from the Prayer-Book not supplanting but blending with and reinforcing the free prayer



which long use has made dear to the people; hymns by Faber and Newman, and Neale and Monsell, side by side with those of the Wesleys and Doddridge and Watts;—these are phenomena which would make an old-fashioned Nonconformist rub his eyes and pinch himself to see whether he was awake or asleep, but which to those who care more for the fulfilment of the Lord's prayer "that they all may be one," than for "the dissidence of dissent," are welcome signs of a drawing nearer to each other of the scattered forces of Christendom. But beyond all this there is the growth of a scholarly and an inquiring spirit among the ministers and candidates for the ministry, which is of the happiest omen for the future. Mansfield College at Oxford, under Dr. Fairbairn's headship, is becoming more and more the nucleus and fountain-head of theological culture to which the Church of England is hardly less indebted than the Nonconformist Churches. The collaboration of the best scholars and theologians of various

denominations in the Revision Committees, in Bible Dictionaries, in Theological Reviews, in every form of research which can throw light upon the problems of the past and of the present,—all this is a happy indication that the best minds of all types of Christianity are learning to rise to the higher levels where they can leave the chilling mists of controversy below them in the valleys, and where they can breathe the purer and more bracing air and hold nearer communion with the Father of Lights. And whatever may be the discouragements and perplexities of the present, it cannot be doubted that the future lies with those whose object is, not to win a victory over an antagonist on the battle-field of doctrines or ceremonies, but to know more of that truth which shall make us free.

Here then it is that we may discern the best hope for the future. Here we may hope to enjoy a religious unity independent of forms of Church organisation, a religious equality independent of questions of establishment and

endowment. Here we may find an opportunity for that out-flanking of the enemy of narrowness and exclusiveness, which though less showy is in the end more thorough than the most head-strong front attack. And here too seems to be the best hope of interesting the intelligent lay people who so steadfastly refuse to be interested in questions as to the origin and obligation of Episcopacy or of Presbytery, in disputations about the Eastward Position and Altar Lights, and even in the great and vital question of Fasting Communion. It is indeed one of the disheartening features of the day, that religiously minded people are being so largely alienated from the public profession and observances of religion by the trivialities of ecclesiasticism and the vulgarities of revivalism—two phases which curiously enough are sometimes found in combination. But if once it can be made apparent that the object of the leaders of Christian thought is, not the maintenance of their own special theories or of their own particular type of ecclesiasticism, but

the rediscovery of Christianity from beneath the accumulated rubbish of ages, then it may be hoped that theology will once more be recognised as the *Magistra scientiarum*, and the knowledge not of this or that system of divinity but of the divine truth itself may gradually emerge from the clearing and purifying of human thought by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Undoubtedly one result of such a happy state of things would be, that men would hold their conclusions more modestly, and rather provisionally than as finally attained definitions. This is clearly the tendency in respect of theories of Church government. It is not long since one school held Episcopacy, another Presbytery, to be ascertainably of divine origin, imposed upon the Church by its Founder. It has been shown by modern historical research that here too, as elsewhere, Evolution has been at work: that government by bishops was not imposed like the rule of a monastic order, but that it sprang up gradually and naturally,

in response to the needs of the growing Church. Episcopacy undoubtedly is of divine origin and of divine authority, but so is every system of government both in the Church and in the State. There is a divine right of bishops as there is a divine right of presbyters ; there is a divine right of kings, but so is there a divine right of republics. And in the same way, the unity of Christians is from God ; but are we therefore to say that the diversities of Christians are not also from God ?

These then seem to be the general principles which should guide us as to the relations of the members of different Churches to each other : that all research after truth is tentative and therefore its expression is provisional ; that if we start with a rigidly defined system either of organisation or of dogma, our system will probably become our master, and will hinder instead of help our religious growth ; and that it is not by keeping aloof from each other, but by knowing more of each other and trying to enter each into the other's point of

view, that we can best supplement our own deficiencies. This last principle has been increasingly recognised of late in the Church of England on the one hand and by the "Free Churches" on the other. Diocesan Conferences and Church Congresses have brought together men of the most opposite views, and have taught them to regard one another not as dangerous heretics who in happier days would have been burnt at the stake, but as fellow-Englishmen, nay, even as fellow-Christians. And the various non-episcopal denominations, which formerly held aloof from each other almost as decidedly as from the Episcopal Church, have not only united in a Free Church Council, but have put forth a catechism of Free Church doctrine which has extorted the admiration even of advanced High Churchmen. And if this is so, might not something analogous take place in the relations of the Anglican Church and Nonconformity? As has been already said, it would be futile and absurd to attempt anything like formal inter-

communion or official recognition; ancient prejudices die hard, and the present attitude of the dominant section of the clergy would make it impossible; but would it not be possible for reasonable men on both sides to meet for friendly conference and discussion and edification, forgetting for a time their denominational distinctions, and seeing in each other only fellow-Christians? The Christian Conference which meets half-yearly in London, and which also met in connection with the Church Congress at Bradford, has proved by experiment that men of the widest ecclesiastical and doctrinal differences, from Roman Catholics to Unitarians, can meet and discuss not only neutral but also controversial questions without generating any heat and without any infringement, nay, rather with a marked strengthening, of Christian charity. And why should not this experiment be repeated on a smaller scale? Why should not persons of different denominations living in the same neighbourhood, and perhaps accustomed to co-operate in secular matters, meet

informally for conference and mutual help and counsel? And why, if any such experiment is attempted, should it be thought a point of loyal Churchmanship to keep aloof from it? Why should not the Church of England accept, what would probably in most cases be gladly offered, a kind of hegemony among the Churches, for which her many-sidedness and her contact with very various forms of thought seem to adapt her?

Such a tentative and rudimentary unity as has been dimly shadowed forth ought not to be difficult of attainment, if it were more widely acknowledged that the only true test of Catholicity is not the acceptance of a particular form of Church organisation, but allegiance to Christ as Head over all things to the Church. The kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, so often spoken of by Christ, suggests to us simply the idea of a king and his people, not excluding but not treating as essential those subordinate offices of ministry, of teaching, of government which are essential to the orderly administration



but not to the fundamental idea of a kingdom. And from this point of view varieties of forms of Church organisation are perhaps advantageous, as tending to bring out the idea that the essence of unity consists in every member of the Christian society standing in a direct relation to Christ the King, not in their acknowledgment of some subordinate and human form of ministry.

It is undoubtedly a hindrance to any approach even to federal union that the Churches which have retained the Episcopal institution have for the most part retained or revived the claim to an exclusive catholicity, which has made the term *Catholic* a badge no longer of comprehension but of narrowness, until we hear not so much of the Catholic Church, as of the Catholic party in the Church of England. It may be permitted to hope that this is but a transient phase of Anglicanism, and that as the Evangelical party has to a great extent merged in the general body of the Church while leaving a potent influence for

good, so the Ritualist movement may pass into a higher and worthier conception of Christian unity and of Church life and worship. And indeed there are not wanting signs that the ecclesiastical narrowness which characterised the Oxford Movement in its earlier stages is giving way under the force of liberal influences. The alliance of Ritualism with Socialism would assuredly have startled the early Tractarian leaders, whose first object was to counteract the rising power of Liberalism ; but at any rate it is an indication that the High Church movement has come down from the mount into the common life of the people, and in doing so it may chance to learn and unlearn much.

There seems to be an increasing consciousness that the Anglican Church can no longer abide in the position of dignified isolation which seemed natural a couple of generations back. The narrowing of the world-space by railways and ocean steamers, the growth of the imperial consciousness, the urgency of social problems, the definite acceptance of

democracy, all tend to the lowering or removal of barriers—social, political, and ecclesiastical. It has been pointed out by friendly foreign critics that the Anglican communion, touching on the one side the ancient Churches of the East and West, and on the other the more liberal and progressive Churches of the Reformation, holds a unique position which should enable her to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers. But to do this effectually, she must not repudiate or be ashamed of her connexion with the one side or the other. And in these days there is no small danger of her being induced to lean more to the ancient, the traditional, the Catholic, than to the modern, the progressive, the Protestant wing. True, so far as the term Catholic includes the term Protestant, as in its genuine sense it does, Catholic is the nobler and prouder title of the two; but, on the other hand, for English Christians to repudiate or set in the background the name of Protestant,

would be to break with the hope of the future in a faithless and unreasonable devotion to the past.

The present age is in many respects one of religious disintegration. The Churches on all sides are complaining that the younger men are not found among their adherents in the numbers in which they ought to be. And among those who remain in religious communion, there is often an uneasy sense that their traditional belief is somewhat insecure. The air is thick with questions which force themselves upon the attention of all who feel that life without a religious basis would not be worth living, and who dare not accept a religious system in block on any external authority whatever. At such a crisis it is inevitable that the traditional presentation of the Christian faith should be revised ; that the transition to modern modes of thought and expression should be made not hastily, not in panic, but as the result of deliberate and calm investigation. For such a work there are

men fitted by education, by firm allegiance to Christ, by unswerving faith in God's guiding hand. Such men are to be found in no one Church and in no one party exclusively. Here at least is a field, not indeed white already to harvest, but inviting the toil of very various labourers, and promising a rich yield in the future. Here is a sphere in which, not ceasing to be Anglican Churchmen or Congregationalists or Baptists or Wesleyans, men may work together, and remember only that they are followers of Him who promised that His Spirit should lead His disciples into all truth.

VII

PROPHETS ANCIENT AND  
MODERN

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## PROPHETS ANCIENT AND MODERN

THAT the clergy in the present day exercise one function included in the name of prophet is not a matter of doubt. They certainly speak before the people. A slight inquiry into the history of the prophets, in the old and in the new dispensation, may help us to magnify our office in so far as we can claim to be the lineal descendants of the prophets. For the other side of our office as ministers of Sacraments as well as of the Word, there is in these days no fear that our functions in this respect will fall into neglect.

In the Old Testament period there are three aspects under which the prophetic office is regarded : (1) There existed from earliest times



men who claimed to speak for God. In the gathering in the wilderness we find one of these incidental allusions to the existence of prophecy which are more interesting than any formal description. In Numb. xi. Eldad and Medad prophesy in the camp, and Moses recognises the impulse as one to be respected. It would appear, however, from the first definite mention of the prophet's office in First Samuel that they were originally connected rather with divination than prophecy. In 1 Sam. ix. 9 we learn that they had been of old called seers. In Samuel's time there were schools of the prophets. The office was becoming recognised. (2) From Samuel to Elisha and onwards there were prophets who exercised public functions. Statesmen prophets who advised the rulers of nations; keepers of the king's conscience, directing his action in public or in private affairs. (3) From the days of the prophet Amos, the first of those whose writings we have collected into a book, they are in the main preachers: they

are preachers of political as well as personal action; they declare the will of God, and especially put before the people, on behalf of God, in whose name they speak, what is His will.

1. The earlier prophets were probably somewhat like the dervishes of modern days, eccentric in dress and demeanour. Rough in clothing and in manner, their zeal was allied to madness, which is held in the East to be sacred.<sup>1</sup> The schools of the prophets were probably like the companies of dervishes, who try to cultivate certain abnormal practices, copied perhaps in the first instance from some saintly individual. No one who has seen the so-called dancing or the howling dervishes can doubt that they are the subjects of religious ecstasy. The dancing dervishes as they wander round the enclosure give the impression of reverential absorption in contemplation. The howling

<sup>1</sup> A well-known antiquary whose ways were likely to create suspicion among the Mahommedan population was protected by one of our consuls, who passed the word to the principal men of the tribes that he was touched in the head.

dervishes verge on madness, but no one can doubt their earnestness.

2. From Samuel onwards the prophet appears from time to time. The office was not hereditary, and was not confined to the schools of the prophets. The call of Elisha from the plough-tail, and the attitude of the schools of the prophets to him and to his master, to whom they evidently look up as belonging to a superior order, show this; his prayer to be endowed with a double portion of his master's spirit makes a clear distinction between his office and that of the ordinary prophets trained in schools. These prophets existed till the rise of the third order. Hanani in the days of Asa, Huldah the prophetess in the days of Josiah, are instances. They appear to have used means of divination at times. The ephod, a plated image, the Teraphim, the Urim and Thummim, the lot, were the instruments. Music was used to develop the gift of inspiration.

The change which passed over the prophetic office in this second period, and pre-

pared the nation for their special functions in the third, is well described by a modern writer.<sup>1</sup> Contrasting them with the individual seers or prophets of the first period, he says: "They were enthusiasts for the people. The ecstatic prophet was not confined to his body nor to nature for the impulses of duty. Israel was his body, his atmosphere, his universe. . . . Through it all he felt the thrill of the Deity. Confine religion to the personal, it grows rancid and morbid. Wed it to patriotism, it lives in the open air, and the blood is pure. So in the days of national danger the Nebiim (prophets) would be inspired like Saul to battle for their country's freedom; in more settled times they would be lifted to the responsibilities of educating the people, counselling governors, and preserving the national traditions. This is what actually took place. After the critical period of Saul's time had passed, the prophets still remain enthusiasts, but they are enthusiasts for affairs. They

<sup>1</sup> G. A. Smith, *Book of the Twelve Prophets*, p. 25.

counsel, they rebuke David. They warn Rehoboam, and they excite Northern Israel to revolt. They overthrow, and they set up dynasties. They offer the king advice on campaigns. Like Elijah they take up against the throne the cause of the oppressed; like Elisha they stand by the throne as the most trusted counsellors in peace and war."

3. In the third stage the prophet is not quite so much of a prime minister. He is the ambassador of God accredited to the Court of Israel. But as the mantle of the prophet of old times descended on him, he spoke to the nation with an authority which differed from that of an ambassador. He was of the people, though from God. He spoke as one with them in interests, as one above them in authority. The mission of this galaxy of prophets began when the nation was in peril from enemies without, or actually in the throes of defeat and bondage. The thunder-cloud of Assyrian supremacy which eventually overwhelmed the nation was visible to their eyes at least amidst

the many other hostile indications. To them was given the invidious task of counselling non-resistance to a national enemy. Only the deepest piety, the strongest patriotism could have nerved them to the task. But they spoke because they felt it to be God's will that they should speak, and therefore there was no hesitation. They spoke because they firmly believed that if their country listened to them they could save it, and therefore there was no reluctance.

It is not my purpose to discuss at any length the views which modern writers hold of the development of the prophetic office. One writer, Cornill, of whom G. A. Smith, himself on the whole cautious and reverent, speaks as a master on the subject, does not hesitate to ascribe to the prophets the inauguration of the priestly power in the form which our Saviour condemned.<sup>1</sup> He is not content with the recension of the Book of Deuteronomy by the scribes in their time. He ascribes the

<sup>1</sup> On this subject see Montefiore's *Hibbert Lectures*.

authorship of the Book of Leviticus to them directly, and traces to their influence in the books the development of what is called Judaism in contrast to Israelitism. When the critics prove to us from the study of the language that a book cannot be of the date it assumes, we are compelled to yield to their better knowledge. Chatterton's writings were proved to be forgeries when the word "its" was shown to have been introduced into the language at a date later than that in which the poems purported to be written. When from their superior knowledge of history they can convince us of errors, we yield to them. But when depending on their own inner consciousness they transfer and eliminate, post-date and pre-date, we are at liberty to put our own inner consciousness against them. When an inference is drawn from the neglect of positive commands that these commands were not in existence we may decline to follow them. We might as well argue that the Bible was not accessible to those who established Roman

idolatry, or that there never was a Reformation, because those who call themselves most orthodox, glory in reproducing in the Church of the Reformation every detail of the unreformed service. Even G. A. Smith himself goes very far in admitting only under protest the authenticity of the later chapters of Amos, because in their hopefulness they differ so much from the earlier portion of the book. It is the humanism of the prophets which is one of their most striking characteristics. It is that though speaking professedly as God's messengers we find so much of the weak man in them, that we venture to claim a lineal descent from them in our office of preachers. The prophets of Israel are optimistic despite the fact that they are full of denunciations of coming evil. The great constellation of the prophets whose utterances have come down to us came to the meridian in days of national disaster, impending over or endured by Israel. "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord," says Isaiah, overcome with the terrible calamity



which had befallen the nation. They prophesied of disaster in times of gloom. But couched as these utterances are in the minor key, they always are transferred to the major key as they speak of the last days. They will never believe in punishment as vindictive; it must be reformatory. Jeremiah indeed in one passage seems to argue against the authenticity of the message of the prophets whom Hananiah represented, because they prophesied of good things. "The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old, prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him" (Jer. xxviii. 8, 9). Yet it is this same Jeremiah who, when he had urged the king to yield to the Chaldæans because resistance was useless, takes up his rights in an inheritance, pays the purchase money,

seals the deeds, in the full confidence that his belief in final deliverance is as well founded as his presage of immediate disaster. When, however, the transaction is completed his faith seems to have given way, and in an exceedingly touching prayer he confesses his weakness, casts himself upon God, and receives a reassuring message (Jer. xxxii. 1-28). I have permitted myself this long digression because it is important to recognise how much of the human element there is in the prophet, how completely on one side at least he was the prototype of the modern preacher.

I was led into the digression by a desire to controvert a position of the critics founded on the apparent discrepancy between two parts of the same prophecy. There is another point on which I feel bound to raise my individual protest. It is difficult to go with Cornill or G. A. Smith in assuming that their deliverances against the over-veneration of sacrifice involve the rejection of the main part of the

Jewish Law, and even of the three great feasts. Modern critics generally accept these statements, and go so far as to say that the sacrifices were contrary to the original design of their religious teachers. Robertson Smith seems to me to throw great light on the teaching of sacrifice, and when these sacrifices are denounced by the prophets, it is their abuse and not their use to which the prophets refer. We mistake the meaning of language purposely exaggerated to produce an effect on the minds of dull hearers ; we completely misconstrue their teaching if we take it apart from the context. If one prophet says in the name of God, " I desired mercy, and not sacrifice," surely the " not " may be construed in the light of the second clause, " and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings " (Hosea vi. 6) ; and if another prophet says, also speaking in his master's name, " I hate, I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies," I believe that I am to read the meaning in the verses which follow :

"But let judgment roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos v. 21-24). The prophet surely is not denouncing feasts and assemblies, but the abuse of both: the substitution of so-called devotion to God for the complementary duty of justice to man. "These things ought ye to have done and not to have left the other undone." The work of the prophets was to weld the people together in the worship of God as a God of righteousness, and thereby to prepare their minds to receive the Gospel truth that where righteousness is there is God—the truth which St. Peter delivered as the Magna Charta of Christianity, that: "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." That the prophets did no more was largely due to the influence of the priests and the priestly party. Clearly there is a difference between the message of the prophet and the priest: the one measuring religion by observances, the other by duties. And this perhaps arises from the very nature of the respective offices. Though

there were schools of the prophets, yet in the main the prophets whose names survive were probably such as could say like Amos (vii. 14), "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycamore-fruit: and the Lord took me as I followed the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel." The priest derived his sanction from an hereditary caste, and his life was bound up with the traditions of that caste, which had much to do with external rites. The prophet felt he had a direct call from God, and sat lightly to the ordinances which were to others so important. He drew his nourishment straight from God, and saw in the ordinances only a help to the attainment of that right-doing which was the end of religion. I should like to have supplemented this short review of the Old Testament prophets by an account of the New Testament prophets, in which the development of the office could be similarly sketched. But the materials for such a sketch I have not been

able to obtain. Dr. Allen<sup>1</sup> has gathered much interesting information on the subject, but even he leaves one much in the dark. That there was an order of prophets in the early Church is certain. We learn this not only from the New Testament, but from the Didache, in which their existence is mentioned, and from which we learn that as in the old so in the new dispensation, the dignity of the office caused men who had no divine call to assume it. In the Eastern Church they survived for a time. But I have failed to learn what was their relation to the gift of tongues, in connection with which St. Paul mentions them, and whether their message was delivered at first only in an unknown tongue, or how it was afterwards delivered. Dr. Allen ascribes their disappearance to the growing power of that spirit which demands in the Church the sacrifice of the individual to the discipline necessary to a corporate body. He sees in monasticism an attempt to resuscitate that individual piety

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Institutions*, Clark and Co., 1898.

which was lost in the growth of a church which magnified the external adjuncts of worship, and of necessity, in the days when it was striving for existence, was subjected to a military régime. With great force he dwells on the fact that monasticism took up this work, and that whilst the secular clergy in their subjection to the Papacy in the Western Church developed the sacramental side of worship, the monastic orders turned their attention to the individual, and concentrated their attention on edification, by laying stress on other parts of worship and especially on preaching.

It is enough to say that these two kinds of work and worship are seen in the Church in all ages, and never were more conspicuous than at present. I believe that in both the old and in the new Church there are certain conditions which distinguish the prophet from the priest. The two will often coexist in the same man, but each man will naturally lay stress on that side of his office to which he is by natural inclination drawn. I believe that

the modern clergyman inherits the office of the prophet, and that some of the clergy feel as distinctly called to the office as did Amos. The two first questions in the service of the ordination of deacons, and the first question in the ordination of priests, may have different meanings, or different depths of meaning, to one and another. I am content to affirm that there are some to whom ordination is not the first call to the ministry—who rejoice in it as the ratification of a call they have already received. I can hardly doubt that there are others who feel that if they had not been obliged to prepare themselves for ordination, they would never have been prophets or priests. Even after the ordination they feel themselves priests rather than prophets. The one class of men feel that they are directly called of God to the work ; the other that they are called of God because they have received a commission from the Church. The priest is certainly called upon to prophesy (a deacon not necessarily so) by reason of his licence as a preacher.



Each clergyman according to his idiosyncrasy will develop as a prophet or as a priest. It seems, however, necessary to insist on the prophetic aspect, because it is that side of the office which allies us with those outside the Church to which we belong. Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, even Unitarian sermons we read, and read with profit. So orthodox a man as the late Canon Liddon makes many references to Channing. And as we read their sermons so we also sing their hymns; for it is the function of the prophet to stir men to sympathy and to action by sacred song as well as by other forms of speech. In this way we involuntarily (many people are probably unaware how often they sing a hymn by Faber or Newman) recognise that the Spirit of God in them is speaking to us. Probably the Church of the future may find some other means of setting a seal on the work of great men than by attending their funerals. Surely when a man like Spurgeon (whose funeral was attended by one bishop at least) has not only kept a

congregation of some thousands together for so many years, but has actually, by the influence his method of preaching has exerted, revolutionised pulpit oratory, we are wrong in not finding some means of recognising his call of God, as Moses did, in days when he could be jealous enough of his own authority if it were wrongly attacked. He who denounces Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, recognises Eldad and Medad. The Church of England has not been always so ungenerous. At one time Churchmen not only recognised the mission of those from outside who had not received Episcopal ordination, but even allowed their own countrymen who had not Church orders to minister in churches in England. There is one relic of those days in the fact that the Huguenots still worship in a crypt of the Metropolitan Cathedral at Canterbury. It is difficult to imagine any system which could include in the ordinary ministry of the Church persons belonging to other sects till they had themselves established their position in the hearts

of men. But an *ex post facto* recognition of those who have long won the popular ear, who are recognised outside their communion as teachers, is surely in some form possible. To obtain such a position is clearly a test more severe than that of any Bishop's Examination—a proof of a definite call of God better than any subjective impression. To such at least so much recognition might be allowed as is involved in the permission to occupy our pulpits. The energy spent on reunion with the Greek and Roman Churches, whilst little effort is made to utilise for a common warfare against evil the great body of Nonconformist zeal, seems to me somewhat wasted. It is as if a man should spend the remains of his fortune to establish a claim to an extinct peerage, whilst he neglected his own family and poor relations.

The most interesting side of the old prophets' office is undoubtedly their patriotism. It may be said of them that they did much to make the Jewish nation. This they did because they believed firmly that the nation's concerns were

God's concerns. In those days it was a part of their duty actually to direct the counsels of rulers. They were at least as well educated as the best, in the days when education consisted in knowing men and not books. The knowledge they had they employed always in the interest of righteousness and morality, and sometimes with a view to dictate a policy. Times are changed, and the modern prophet has not so much to dictate as to inspire. With the individual actions of men and nations he has little to do; with the spirit which ought to dictate these actions he has much to do. Partisanship he must eschew; but since party spirit is a necessity in politics he must try so to speak as to win a hearing for the side to which party spirit is apt to blind the eyes. A political clergyman is always distasteful to those at least whose politics differ from his own. Rightly so if he presumes to use the vantage-ground of the pulpit to insist on a party view. It is manifestly unfair that he should have all the argument to himself, and that with an

audience who cannot express assent or dissent in the usual way. But there is a kind of unpopularity which we ought not to be ashamed of incurring, that, namely, which comes from the assertion of the claims of religion to influence decision in political and social matters. The prophet of these days, sobered by a sense that he is speaking as God's representative, need not fear to make himself unpalatable to people when he dwells on the broad principles which should guide action on lines opposed to mere opportunism, to commercial greed, or to national vainglory. It is possible surely in a contested election to proclaim views which may encourage each elector to do his duty without prescribing on which side he ought to vote. In this as in the case of war he may well adopt the policy which Sir Thomas More postulates for his Utopian clergy, that of remaining apart from the 'contest, and yet intervening so soon as they can promote the interests of mercy and good feeling. The right to take part in the social and municipal work of our country is

now conceded to the clergy. It was not a few years ago. Now it is recognised that it is religious work to bring about conditions of life in which there is a reasonable prospect for the preservation of self-respect, health, and morality. And such topics may well form subjects of pulpit talk. The prophet must not allow himself to be so far carried away with his subject as to forget in these days that he has to convince as well as to inspire ; and to do this he must study the arguments on the other side. But his object after all will be to inspire ; to lift the questions out of the level of ordinary street, club, and even newspaper morality, to a position worthy of their claim to a place in the kingdom of God. One is glad that the Encyclical of the last Lambeth Conference opens with words with which I will close this branch of the subject : " We begin with the questions which affect moral conduct, inasmuch as moral conduct is made by our Lord the test of the reality of religious life." Temperance, purity, sanctity of marriage, industrial problems,

international arbitration are the subjects on which the assembled bishops first deliver themselves.

And this leads me to the last subject on which I shall touch, the office of the prophet as a preacher of morality. The modern clergyman sometimes forgets that he is prophet as well as priest, and makes use of his prophetic office mainly to strengthen his position as a priest, in his interpretation of that word. No doubt he would reply that he only wishes to inculcate his doctrine of the Sacraments in order to promote that very morality. But surely the teachings of history are not to be set aside. That has been precisely the aim of the Roman Catholic and of the Jesuit, and we may without hesitation put the question as to whether their policy has been successful in the production of morality in those countries where they have till within the present century been practically unopposed. Your earnest clergyman who will be nothing but priest, because he considers it necessary to insist on

his divine mission and to keep in abeyance the human side, dwells on his authority and magnifies his office as a channel through which flow the Sacraments. These are the means of grace. All services of the Church are to lead up to them, and he is anxious not to confine the name of sacrament to Baptism and the Supper of the Lord; there are other rites in which his interference is indispensable. Without the means of grace the soul which his prophetic power has roused to earnestness will relapse. We contend on the other hand that you can never promote morality or develop the instinct of social duty unless you give a man something beyond his own soul to think about. It is strange that those to whom we owe so much in the restoration of the doctrine of the corporate existence of the Church, the body of which Christ is the Head—a doctrine which had been overshadowed by the stress laid on the important doctrine of individual contact with God through Christ—should now seem to be undoing their work by their insist-



ence on the doctrine of sacramental grace. It is the inevitable result of fixing the eye on the details of worship that it becomes short-sighted as regards the larger relations. Those who lead the movement retain something of the proper proportion ; their disciples fail to grasp the larger outlook. Those who tithe mint, and anise, and cummin, forget the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. And the same result ensues when the prophet, forgetting the object of his office, dwells on doctrines as his brother on practices. Evangelicalism has been like Sacramentalism largely responsible for a divorce between religion and the common duties of life. Exaggerate the importance of the form of expression of faith, and you make religion consist in a right faith rather than in a right life. Exalt the first day of the week and the duties discharged on it to an importance for which you find no sanction in the New Testament, and inevitably the ordinary duties of week-day life are placed on a lower scale in respect of religiousness. It would

be no uncommon thing to find a man who thought that to open his shop on Sunday was a wilful sin, and yet looked very lightly on practices in trade sanctioned by custom, which would not bear the test of moral judgment. In both cases, that of the Sacramentalist and of the Salvationist, you cannot see the wood for the trees. And in both cases there is this further danger, that the future is exaggerated at the expense of the present. Salvation becomes not as the word implies, perfect soundness of body, soul, and spirit; it falls into the lower meaning it originally had before Christianity baptized it—safety, security. The kingdom of God which was meant to be established on earth is relegated to a distant future, and eternal life (which our Lord tells us is “to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent”) is supposed to be an inheritance, on which we enter first when we have crossed the bar.

I can best call attention to the danger to be seen in the exaltation of the priestly over the

prophetic function, if I say that we have come to a condition in which the ordinary church-or chapel-goer is conscious of sin against God, is conscious of sin against his own soul, but hardly seems to realise that there is such a thing as a sin against society. Yet when Christ inculcates the duty of forgiveness, the aim He sets before the disciples is "Thou hast gained thy brother." When Paul would restrain his followers from immorality he appeals to them in the aspect of the membership of Christ. It is the sin against the body corporate on which he insists when warning them about self-indulgence in the use of unclean meats : he tells them it might make a brother stumble. The province of the prophet is to remind men of this brotherhood, to weld them into a body of defence, to stir them to a crusade against evil. The prophet will be successful as he develops his human side, not when he dwells on his authority as a divine messenger. The office has indeed a history, a dignity, a power which it is impossible to exaggerate. It is,

however, as we identify ourselves with men that we shall magnify that office. And surely there are signs that in this matter God has not left the Church unguided—signs which may well make us hopeful as to the future. In what has been said of the necessity of establishing better social conditions in order that religious influences may have a fair chance of development, and of the need of raising the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, it would be wrong to forget the great change which has come over the clergy and their work. There may be seen at times a little danger of mixing politics with religion, of becoming champions of one class, of seeing only the faults of capital and the virtues of labour; but the devotion of the clergy to their work, and the sympathy which has replaced patronising ways, will in the long-run mend any mistake of this sort. In whatever section of the Church we look we recognise the same spirit. But this recognition cannot blind us to the fact that the emphasis laid by some on ritual acts and sacramental

agency, by others on the forms of dogmatic acceptance and subjective feelings, hamper the advance of true religion. The one associates religion with observances till, by the stress laid on them, they become religious acts instead of means of grace ; the other, denying to men the claim to be religious unless they can frame their convictions in a certain way, shuts out a large class who might be useful fellow-workers—both erecting a barrier against the direct access of the soul to God, in which lies the prophet's view of religion. Morality suffers meanwhile because of the severance from religion. Sometimes, as has been suggested, religion (the duty to God) is substituted for morality (the duty towards man), whereas Christ said, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Sometimes there is held to be a direct antagonism between religion and morality. But always there is a large amount of energy of good unabsorbed by religion, which had it the religious impulse and the religious hope would be a far greater power.

It is the mission of the prophet to develop this. May the story of the future witness that this age has learnt from the history of the past :  
 "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them."



VIII

OUR DEBT TO MODERN BIBLICAL  
SCHOLARSHIP

BY THE REV. AGAR BEET, D.D.





## OUR DEBT TO MODERN BIBLICAL SCHOLARSHIP

A CONSPICUOUS feature of modern Biblical scholarship is that in our day, to an extent unknown before, the books of the Bible have been subjected, touching their authorship, date, correctness of copies, meaning, and worth, to the same tests and the same methods of investigation as any other ancient documents. This mode of research is both legitimate and necessary. For by assuming flesh and blood, and by laying on earth the foundations of His eternal kingdom, the Son of God submitted Himself and His work to the forces and influences which mould all human life and work, and took His place on the page of human history. By so doing, He challenged for

Himself and His work the legitimate criticism to which must be submitted whatever is written there. Moreover, only by the ordinary methods of human investigation can we discover the real worth of Holy Scripture as a factor in human life.

While submitting the books of the Bible and their contents to the ordinary tests of literary and historical criticism, we must however not forget that these books stand alone, far above all other documents of the past, as the ground on which rest the faith and hope of unnumbered thousands of the servants of Christ, and the perennial source to them of a spiritual guidance and strength without which the burdens of life would be intolerable. This spiritual value ought not to shield these books from strict investigation; but it ought to prompt the utmost care both in making the investigation and in stating its results. Moreover, the spiritual help derived from the Bible is part of the proof of its historic truth and of its divine authority. No

theory of Holy Scripture is satisfactory which does not take due account of this important experimental evidence.

In this paper I shall endeavour to show that modern Biblical research has been abundantly fruitful in results helpful to Christian thought and life.

Among general benefits I note the following. The Textual Criticism of the New Testament has put its documents before us in a form practically the same as that in which they left the writers' hands; or, at least, has brought within narrow and well-defined limits the area still open to doubt. The assured text of the New Testament, thus obtained, is an immense gain. They who object to its teaching can no longer hide themselves under the excuse that probably or possibly our copies are incorrect.

Another gain is that modern Philology has given us a more thorough knowledge of the languages of the Bible, of all language, and of the relation of thought to language; and

has thus armed us with a grammatical exegesis which enables us to catch the writer's meaning and to trace his line of thought with an accuracy and fulness impossible before. The same improved methods of research enable us also better to understand and use many other ancient works which shed light on the Bible. In short, just as the telescope has brought us nearer to the planet Mars, and has enabled us to investigate it from a nearer point of view, so modern scholarship has placed us in closer mental contact with the sacred writers, and has thus brought us nearer to the historic foundations of the Christian Faith. Some practical results of this nearer view I shall now adduce.

The New Testament, as being far more important, and as supported by evidence much more abundant than can be adduced for the Old, demands our first attention. The well-attested results attained in this department will then be a secure platform of approach to the more scantily attested results claiming to have been reached in the Old Testament.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

Abundant evidence, external and internal, proves beyond a shadow of doubt the genuineness of at least four of the epistles which bear the name of Paul, viz. those to the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians ; and a vast mass of manuscripts, versions, and quotations, assures us that, within very narrow limits, our copies are correct. Moreover, these four epistles, accepted as genuine by all modern scholars, even by those who reject their teaching about Christ and the Gospel, become at once a standard with which we can compare other epistles claiming to be from the same pen. They thus afford valuable, and in my view decisive, evidence of the genuineness of other letters attributed to Paul.

These results are of utmost value. For they at once bridge over eighteen centuries, and place us on firm ground in the presence of the greatest of the apostles of Christ. His letters reveal to us his vast intellectual power,

his well-balanced judgment, his lofty moral character ; and thus prove him to be a witness most worthy of confidence. Through them we also look down into his inmost thought ; and in the image of Christ therein reflected we see Christ as He was seen by the greatest of His followers. They give us a full and harmonious account of the Gospel as Paul understood it ; and they reveal to us the lowly homage with which the pupil of Gamaliel bowed before the Carpenter of Nazareth as in the presence of One infinitely greater than the greatest of men.

All this suggests an inquiry whether Paul understood correctly the teaching and claims of Christ. To this question, the rest of the New Testament affords a decisive answer. For we find there other documents evidently not from his pen, and differing widely from his letters both in phraseology, modes of thought, and even to some extent in their conception of the Gospel. Most of these documents are anonymous ; but abundant evidence proves that

nearly all were written within less, most of them within very much less, than a century of the death of Christ. In the New Testament we have a chorus of witnesses speaking to us from the first or second generation of the followers of Christ, and for the most part, except his own epistles, independent of the Apostle Paul.

These other witnesses enable us to eliminate from the Epistles of Paul the distinctively Pauline element; and thus to trace his teaching to a source higher than himself. For it is impossible to doubt that the new element common to these various witnesses is due to the great Teacher at whose feet sat, directly or indirectly, all the writers of the New Testament. Now these various witnesses present to us, in different degrees of development, the same portrait of One who claims to be the Son of God and the future Judge of the world, and an account of His teaching different from, yet in deep essential harmony with, that given by Paul. In other words, we find in the New



Testament decisive documentary proof that Christ left in the minds of all His early followers whose opinions have come down to us a confident belief that their Master occupies a position of unique superiority to all other men and of unique nearness to God, attested, as they believed, by the return to life of His body laid dead in the grave.

This result of our investigation of the Christian documents, few will question; and it is of immense value. For it compels us to believe, either that Christ is in objective actuality the Only-begotten Son of God, and that the Gospel set forth in the New Testament as preached by Him is true, or that all His early followers—even those who gained for Him the homage of mankind, and through whose preaching He became the Saviour of the world—misunderstood altogether their Master's position and teaching, and attributed to Him claims from which He would have recoiled as blasphemous. This plain alternative, which is forced upon us by modern scholarship, compels those who

reject the divinity of Christ to take up a new position. They are now compelled to charge all, or nearly all, the writers of the New Testament with seriously misrepresenting the teaching of Christ about Himself and God, and about the way of salvation. For, indisputably, these writers describe Him as claiming a relation to God which modifies greatly our conception of God, and as announcing a way of salvation through His own death which no one will accept who rejects the unique claims attributed to Him in the New Testament.

A conspicuous example of this dilemma is found in Dr. Martineau's *Seat of Authority in Religion*. On page 329 he blames the apostles for not obeying Christ's command "to tell no man that He was the Christ," and adds: "If the disciples had only kept that injunction instead of spending their lives in reversing it, Christendom, I am tempted to think, might have possessed a purer record of genuine revelation, instead of a mixed text of divine truth and false apocalypse." He says that the doctrine

that Christ is the Messiah "has spoiled the very composition of the New Testament, and, both in its letters and its narratives, has made the highest influence ever shed upon humanity subservient to the proof of untenable positions and the establishment of unreal relations." On page 331 Dr. Martineau goes on to say: "That the Messianic theory of the Person of Jesus was made for Him, and palmed upon Him by His followers, and was not His own, appears to me a reasonable inference from several slight but speaking indications." But for this serious misrepresentation he consoles himself by saying that "had it not been for this Jewish conception of Him, we should probably have had no life of Him at all. . . . That we have memoirs of Jesus at all we owe therefore to the very theory about Him which has so much coloured and distorted them; and we must accept the inevitable human condition, and patiently strip off the disfiguring folds of contemporary thought, and gain what glimpses we can of the pure reality within." If this be so,

the world has been saved by a gross misrepresentation of its Saviour. That their opponents have been driven by modern scholarship into this untenable position—a position becoming more untenable every day as the grandeur of the character of Christ and His influence on mankind become day by day better understood—strengthens immensely the position of those who defend the historic faith of the Church of Christ. In other words, modern Biblical research has given to us a NEW AND IRRESISTIBLE APOLOGETIC.

Modern scholarship has also given to us a better method of DOCTRINAL THEOLOGY. This rests no longer on creeds or traditional teaching or on isolated passages of the Bible. By enabling us to determine with greater accuracy and fulness the meaning of each word and clause and sentence, and thus to follow more closely the writer's line of thought, it brings us into the presence of the living thought of apostles and evangelists. It enables us to analyse the thought of each, to trace up details to root-ideas, and thus to gain a connected view of

each writer's conception of Christ and the Gospel as an orderly and intelligible whole. These various conceptions of various sacred writers we can compare ; and this comparison reveals, amid many differences, a deep underlying harmony. Abundant evidence, gathered by scientific modes of research, assures us that the harmonious system of theology thus reached is no artificial invention of man but, like the Solar System discovered by Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton, objective reality. Thus modern Biblical research has given to us, and promises still further to give, not merely a new Apologetic, but a richer and more accurate knowledge of God and Christ and the Gospel.

Standing securely on this foundation, and enriched by this fuller knowledge of the Gospel, we can discuss calmly certain literary questions still unsolved. Of these, the most important and difficult question is that presented by the writings attributed by ancient tradition to the Apostle John. The Fourth Gospel and the First Epistle are undoubtedly from the same

pen. The former contains many and various marks of truthfulness and of extreme accuracy ; and not a few indications which support strongly the abundant and confident and uncontradicted testimony, from the latter part of the second century onwards, that it was written by the Apostle John. This evidence, if it stood alone, we should accept without doubt. But the case is greatly complicated by the fact that to the same apostle is attributed also the Book of Revelation, and that this is supported by documentary evidence, not nearly so abundant as that for the Fourth Gospel, and not unanimous, but reaching back to a still earlier date. On the other hand, a wide difference in grammar and diction and modes of thought and theological attitude seems to make it impossible, in spite of many links of connection, that both documents came from the same pen. This difficulty has not, so far as I have seen, been fairly stated by those who hold the common origin of these very different documents. In order to remove it, various sugges-

tions have been made ; but all of them are, in my view, inadequate ; and the problem remains unsolved.

On the other hand, the difficulties which surround every hypothesis for the precise authorship of the Fourth Gospel and the Book of Revelation do not overturn or weaken the abundant and decisive proof that the former is a correct and most valuable delineation of Christ and the Gospel. And they do little or nothing to weaken the many indications that we owe this picture to the Apostle John. So that even this serious difficulty touches only slightly the ground of the Christian Faith.

Modern scholarship has enabled us to submit to severe scrutiny the statements of fact contained in the New Testament. These have been tested as we should test any other records of the past. The result has been, as I think, a complete vindication, not only of their substantial truth, but, with a few exceptions, of their extreme and minute accuracy. A similar line of research proves that in the Gospels and

Epistles we have a correct account and exposition of the actual teaching of Christ. In other words, historical criticism proves that in the New Testament we have, not fiction or misrepresentation, but facts and truth.

The historical trustworthiness of the Christian documents in all that bears on the purpose for which they were given, viz. to be the documentary and historical foundation of the Christian Faith, enables us to investigate without misgiving certain apparent or real discrepancies in matters of less importance. It soon becomes evident that the accuracy of the New Testament does not extend to every trifling detail. Even the solemn words in which Christ instituted the Lord's Supper are not the same in all four accounts. These cannot all give His *ipsissima verba* or their nearest equivalents in Greek. And between the two forms into which these four accounts group themselves, a reverent criticism may be permitted to judge. One evangelist represents Jairus as announcing that his daughter was



dead; the others report that he said she was dying and afterwards heard that she was dead. The author of the First Gospel evidently did not know of this message from the ruler's house. And this is in close harmony with the whole Gospel, which pays slight attention to unimportant details of fact but gives a very full account of the teaching of Christ.

A more important discrepancy occurs in reference to the exact time of our Lord's crucifixion. Had we only the Synoptist Gospels, we should infer with confidence that He instituted His Supper at the time when the Jews were keeping the Paschal Feast. On the other hand, the Fourth Gospel contains reliable indications that Christ died at the time the paschal lambs were slain, and that consequently the Supper was held the evening before.

In all these cases our only means for arriving at a judgment are those used in similar discrepancies in ordinary human documents. And I believe that in each case these means

are sufficient for reasonable certainty. But they reveal what in any other documents would be called slight inaccuracies.

These inaccuracies warn us not to claim divine authority for every casual statement in the New Testament. For instance, in Jude 14, 15, certain words found in the Book of Enoch are attributed to the patriarch as actually spoken by him. It would be unfair to claim for this pseudonymic, though interesting, work the authority evidently given to it by Jude. This case is an example of the serious difficulties in which those who claim for the Bible absolute inerrancy needlessly involve themselves.

The place of the New Testament in God's purpose of salvation is now evident. It is a record of the supreme revelation given by God to men in Christ—a record sufficiently extensive and accurate for all the purposes for which the revelation was given, and containing in itself complete documentary evidence that the revelation is from God.

We notice also that if the Epistles and

Gospels, or similar works, had not been written, or had not survived, our faith would not have the firm historical foundation on which it now rests securely. Had there been no reliable documentary evidence touching the actual teaching of Christ and His apostles, and touching His life, death, and resurrection, the Christian Faith would, to all appearance, have been lost amid the chaos of strange beliefs which arose in the second century. If so, the great purpose for which God gave His Son to die would not have been attained. He would have died in vain. This we cannot conceive. We therefore infer with certainty that the documentary evidence needful for its accomplishment was itself a part of God's purpose of salvation. For, undoubtedly, this last must have included whatever was needful for its accomplishment. If so, both the revelation and its needful record are gifts of Him who gave His Son to die for man.

This inference is confirmed by the wonderful fitness of the New Testament to convey to

all ages and all nations an account of the Gospel sufficient for all the spiritual needs of man, together with a sure and reasonable proof that He who announced it is worthy of our homage and confidence. The unique spiritual value of the Christian Scriptures, as attested by the experience of the servants of Christ, is complete proof of their divine origin.

Since the record was written by human hands, and since the Holy Spirit is the divine agent of whatever God does in man, we infer with certainty that we owe the record and its wonderful sufficiency and accuracy to a special influence of the Spirit of God. This special influence, which differs from other spiritual guidance as the New Testament differs from other books, is the **INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**.

To sum up. The New Testament is not the Pearl of Great Price. This honour belongs to the Incarnate Son and to Him only. But the New Testament is the casket in which that Pearl was conveyed to us, and without which

it would not have reached us. So accurately does the casket fit the Pearl, and so wonderful is the workmanship even of the casket, that we infer with certainty that He who gave the Pearl gave also the casket. The casket is locked. None can open it except He who made it, viz. the Spirit of God. But wherever the casket is, He is—ever ready to open it to the sincere seeker and thus to make him rich indeed.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT

The evidence available for the authorship and date of the books of the Old Testament is for the most part scanty and uncertain.

The historical books are nearly all anonymous and without date. The prophetic books bear the writers' names, and most of them are dated; and in some cases the dates thus given are strongly confirmed by the contents. But for the Old Testament we lack almost altogether the early external evidence so valuable in determining the authorship and date of the

books of the New Testament. We are therefore thrown back on internal evidence, which, although sometimes very convincing, is frequently uncertain.

In spite of this scantiness of evidence, the Old Testament affords decisive and very important theological results—results independent of questions still open.

We notice at once, from beginning to end, its unswerving monotheism. Everywhere we read of one personal God, the Creator and Ruler of heaven and earth, absolutely distinct from, and superior to, all that He has made; the God of Israel, yet punishing Israel's sin, and ready to receive all men who turn to Him, and announcing blessing for all mankind. This teaching stands in conspicuous contrast to all contemporary literature, to the polytheism and pantheism of India, to the mythology of Greece, and the cold theism of the Greek philosophers. It proves, beyond possibility of doubt, that ancient Israel enjoyed a knowledge of God infinitely superior, as a moral force and help,

to that possessed by any contemporary nation; that they worshipped, and as a nation they only, the personal God who is now the supreme object of faith and love in all progressive nations. This marked religious superiority, this remarkable anticipation of the religion of the future, can be accounted for only by a special revelation of God to Israel beyond the revelation given, in nature, to all men.

Not less conspicuous than the superiority of the Old Testament, in its teaching about God, to all contemporary literature is its inferiority to the teaching of the New Testament on the same subject. This contrast is complete proof that Jesus of Nazareth gave to mankind, by claiming to be Himself in a special sense the Son of God, an altogether new conception of God—a conception involving eternal society and order and harmony and love. That we owe this conception to Christ is proved by the sacred writings of Israel, which throw open to our inspection the highest

religious thought on earth previous to His appearance. And it is worthy of note that, whereas Jewish monotheism exerted comparatively little influence on surrounding nations, the new conception of a Triune God, brought into the world by Christ, soon spread to many lands, and is in our own day the deep conviction of an overwhelming majority of the most devout men on earth, and is the current belief of the whole civilised world. This vastly greater effect of the teaching of Christ as compared with that contained in the Old Testament, we cannot but connect with the new conception of God which He gave to men.

Another conspicuous feature of the Old Testament is found in the glowing descriptions, by the prophets, of infinite blessing to go forth from Israel to all nations. These glorious hopes have no parallel in ancient literature. Strange to say, these grand anticipations cherished, amid national decay and ruin, by ancient Israel are to-day the inspiring hope of the best men in all civilised nations ; and



are in no small degree being fulfilled before our eyes in the material and moral and spiritual growth of these nations. These hopes and their wonderful fulfilment cannot be accounted for by any of the ordinary influences which mould human thought and life. They are complete proof that the fuller knowledge of God possessed by ancient Israel was due to a special revelation from Him who in later days revealed Himself to man still more fully in the Incarnate Son of God.

Of this wonderful religious superiority of Israel to the rest of mankind, the Old Testament gives an historical explanation. It narrates that the Creator of the world became the friend of Abraham and entered into special alliance with him and his descendants; that with supernatural power He brought these last out from Egypt, gave to them a law, moral and ritual, and institutes of worship; brought them into the land of Canaan, and in later times maintained with them special intercourse through the agency of the prophets.

An unwavering belief of this account of its early history colours the entire subsequent life and thought of Israel as reflected in its literature. The many references by the prophets to the deliverance from Egypt and to the early history of the nation, and still more definite and numerous historical references in the Psalms, prove that even the spiritual life and song of the nation were moulded to a wonderful degree by its past history. In this respect the Old Testament stands alone in ancient literature. This deep impression on the thought and life of the nation can be explained only by the substantial truth of the history which produced so remarkable an effect.

The historical truth of the Old Testament receives important confirmation in the New, where the ancient narratives are accepted with perfect confidence by Christ and His apostles as actual fact, and are made the basis of theological teaching. Now we have already found in the New Testament complete documentary evidence that Christ is in a unique

sense the Son of God, and that the apostles were the agents through whom He became the Saviour of the world. If so, it is most unlikely that in so important a matter as the historical truth of the Old Testament they were in serious error.

In other words, tested by the ordinary principles of historical criticism, the Old Testament contains in itself decisive evidence of its historical truthfulness; and this is confirmed by the supreme revelation recorded in the New Testament.

The above general argument proves only the general truth of the account of the history of Israel given in the Old Testament. All details, literary and historical, must be tested on their own merits.

It cannot be denied that modern research has modified traditional opinion about the authorship and date of the books of the Old Testament much more than about those of the New. This is due to the scantiness of the evidence, which has left more room in the

Old Testament than in the New for incorrect tradition, and therefore more need for critical revision.

Till this century most Christian writers accepted the Jewish tradition that the whole Pentateuch, except perhaps a few verses at the end, was written by Moses. But it is now almost unanimously admitted that the Pentateuch was not written by any one man, but was compiled from various documents belonging to different ages. This composite authorship is very conspicuous in the early chapters of Genesis, *e.g.* in chap. ii. 4*b*-iv. compared with chaps. i.-ii. 4*a* and with chap. v. It is seen not merely in the changed names of God, but in a multitude of words and phrases and modes of thought peculiar to one or other of the portions noted above. These are indisputable proofs of different authorship. And similar indications, though less conspicuous, are found throughout the Pentateuch.

That the Book of Isaiah consists of various parts, prophetical and historical, is evident

to every one who reads it carefully and consecutively. Whether these parts are from one pen or one age, is matter for reverent critical research. Such inquiry ought not to be silenced by casual popular references in the New Testament, which assume that the latter part of the book, like the former, was written by the prophet Isaiah. Such use of the New Testament was very far from the writers' thought, and is therefore unsafe. Still greater difficulties gather round the Book of Daniel. Its wonderful predictions of an eternal kingdom to be erected on the ruins of all earthly kingdoms—a prediction receiving fulfilment before our eyes in the spreading kingdom of Christ—reveal plainly in this remarkable book the hand of God. But it is very difficult, or impossible, to accept as from Daniel, in the form in which we now possess them, even some parts of the book which claim to be from him.

Fortunately the questions of authorship and date just referred to do not touch the abundant

and decisive historical proof that the Bible contains a substantially correct, and divinely given, record of a supreme revelation given to men in Christ, and of other earlier revelations preparatory to it. And the research which they have prompted has added greatly to our evidence of the reality of this divine revelation and has done much to interpret to us its meaning.

The difficulties most serious to the devout reader of the Old Testament are certain passages which express, and sometimes attribute to God, sentiments and directions which the moral sense of Christians, illumined by the spirit of Christ, forbids them to approve or tolerate. Such are Deborah's approval of the treachery of Jael in Judges v. 24, the vindictive Psalms, *e.g.* *Psa. cxxxvii. 9*, and the terrible command in *1 Sam. xv. 3* to massacre the entire population of Amalek, men, women, and little children. No sophistry can persuade us that this last command expresses the will of God.

Relief in this difficulty is found in the fact that all these passages occur in the Old Testament. In the recorded words of Christ, and indeed in the letters of His apostles, we find nothing but that which secures at once our highest reverence. Our chief thought in reading the earlier passages quoted above, is gratitude that our lot has been cast under the better teaching of the Gospel of Christ. They are thus to Christians a means of grace. And this suggests a reason for, and justification of, their place in the sacred volume. They are a correct picture of actual spiritual life under the influence of the imperfect and preparatory revelations of the Old Covenant. This correct picture of actual spiritual life reveals, as we have seen, a supernatural manifestation of truth given by God and in some measure apprehended by men. And its instructiveness for men living under the fuller revelation in Christ is complete proof that the record was secured for us by God, who is also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The low moral tone of some passages in the Old Testament warns us very solemnly not to claim the authority of God for every sentiment expressed in the Bible. The Holy Scriptures were given for our thoughtful study, and we must endeavour to interpret them in the light of the purpose of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. In the New Testament we find the supreme revelation of God in Christ, fully apprehended and reproduced by His immediate followers. On this recorded revelation rests the faith of His servants now. In the Old Testament we find a partial and preparatory revelation, more or less fully apprehended, and faithfully reproduced as the writers understood it. And this correct record of actual thought and life in ancient days is of great and abiding value.

The true nature and aim of Holy Scripture, and its relation to the Gospel of Christ, are now evident. The Bible is—not itself a revelation, but—a record of the supreme



revelation given to men in Christ and of certain preparatory revelations leading up to it—a record sufficiently extensive and correct for the purposes for which the revelation was given. In the wonderful fitness of the record for the purpose for which it was given we trace, guiding and controlling the human writers, a hand divine. That unseen guiding hand is the inspiration of Holy Scripture. In this very real sense both the revelation and the record are from God.

Some earlier writers claimed that the Bible is infallible, not merely in the all-important matters for which it was given, but in every other matter which it incidentally touches. This claim cannot fairly be inferred from the language of the Bible about itself; for its writers' thoughts were concentrated on the great themes about which they wrote. Moreover this claim is disproved, much more clearly in the Old Testament than in the New, by certain passages, numerous but not very important, where to all appearance the writers

of the Bible are in hopeless disagreement. As an example, I may quote 2 Sam. xxiv. 24, where we read that David bought from Araunah his threshing-floor for fifty shekels of silver, compared with 1 Chron. xxi. 25, where we read that David paid for it the immense sum of six hundred shekels of gold. This discrepancy, the theory of absolute inerrancy does nothing to solve. Such cases must be dealt with only as we deal with differences in ordinary fallible documents. The theory of inerrancy therefore fails just where we need it; and it is not only useless but fatal. For they who make an assertion must be prepared to defend it, and to face the difficulties it involves. How immense are these difficulties, they know best who are most familiar with the Bible. Fortunately these difficulties do not touch the position marked out for us by the new Apologetic. In other words, the modern research which has discovered most of these difficulties has, by the providence of God, discovered also the way of escape.

Some have suggested that the Bible is infallible in teaching *doctrine* but not when narrating *events*. But the Gospel rests on the facts of Christ. In each case we need certainty. This we find in the Bible. And no one who has found it will deny that we owe it to that good Spirit who has secured for the Church this sufficient record of the words and works of Christ.

Others say that the *substance* of the Bible is inspired, but not the *words*. But we have the substance only in the words; and nowhere is the hand of God in Holy Scripture more apparent than in the accurately chosen words which convey to us the truth revealed in Christ. Yet we need not infer that the words were dictated to the sacred writers. Light is shed on the mode of inspiration by the words of Paul in 1 Cor. ii. 13: "Which things we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit." Human wisdom does not dictate words, but quickens the speaker's faculties to select the

best words. Such quickening in a higher degree, and probably in different degrees, the writers of the Bible received from the Holy Spirit.

We may therefore say that both thoughts and words of the Bible touching both facts and doctrines are inspired, *i.e.* written under a special influence of the Holy Spirit; and are true, *i.e.* correct reproductions of reality, so far as is needful for the great purpose for which they were given; or, in other words, that the Bible is absolutely perfect as a record of divine revelations apprehended more or less fully by men, and as an expression of the spiritual life thereby evoked; but not absolutely perfect, though always worthy of high respect, in other incidental matters which lay outside this main purpose.

Much confusion has been poured on recent controversy by failure to distinguish two widely different theological positions and groups of scholars often mixed together under the vulgar nickname of "the Higher Critics." One group

denies the divinity and bodily resurrection of Christ, and endeavours to bring everything in the Bible into harmony with this denial. These men give up all the distinctive features of the Gospel of Christ. To this group belong Wellhausen and Pfleiderer, and Dr. Martineau ; but, so far as I know, no other prominent English Biblical scholar. It is not the position of a group of English scholars who are often carelessly put in the same class, but who hold firmly the historic faith of the Church of Christ, although they cannot shut their eyes to the untenableness of many traditional opinions about the authorship and date of the books of the Old Testament. Indeed they who cling most tenaciously to the old position find themselves compelled day by day to retreat from it. They eagerly tell us that many opinions once confidently asserted have been discarded, but they forget to add that a much larger number of opinions once strenuously opposed are now accepted even by themselves.

To sum up. Modern Biblical research has given us a purer text of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament; and has enabled us better to understand it. By so doing, it has given us a nearer and clearer vision of the historic Christ, and a broader and firmer grasp of the Gospel He preached; and has placed the historical defence of the Gospel on a more solid foundation. It has also shed light upon the earlier covenant, and its meaning and purpose.

This nearer view has revealed perplexing difficulties. But these do not touch the foundations of our faith, and therefore need not trouble us. He who so wonderfully guided and guarded the ancient writers is our Teacher. And along the path they trod, as their footsteps are visible on the sacred page, He will guide us into the nearer presence of Him about whom Moses and the prophets wrote.



IX

THE NEED FOR A RATIONAL  
CHRISTIANITY

BY F. REGINALD STATHAM





## THE NEED FOR A RATIONAL CHRISTIANITY

Not many months ago the Church of England, and indeed the cause of religion generally, escaped from a grave and imminent danger. That danger was perceptible in the discussion that arose in the House of Commons over the second reading of the Church Discipline Bill. The Bill represented an attempt—a short-sighted but no doubt honest attempt—to deal by means of a species of surgical operation with a certain set of ecclesiastical symptoms the heroic treatment of which, while in no sense effecting a cure of the disorder from which they sprang, but rather exasperating it, would inevitably have given rise to a new and more formidable set of symptoms which might

in themselves have seemed to invite even more drastic treatment. It was easy for those who supported the Church Discipline Bill, for those who would subject the ever-changing forms of religious thought to the conditions of legal enactment, to invite those who were accused of lawlessness to march over to the Roman camp. Fortunately, the common sense of a majority in the House of Commons saved them from the necessity of witnessing the painful and baneful results of their own advice. For if that Bill had been passed, if it had thus been made clear to an earnest and devoted section in that great national institution, the Established Church, that their work and their convictions were no longer regarded as consonant with the main stream of national life, a disruption would have taken place which would have shaken the whole edifice of social and political life to its foundation—a disruption far exceeding in its consequences that which occurred when, owing to a strained interpretation of the law, half the Scotch Establishment marched out

into the wilderness. For while the founders of the Free Church of Scotland were led into the wilderness by a democratic ideal, the invitation to the High Church party in the Church of England to migrate to Rome was an invitation to them to adopt an ideal always in conflict not only with the ideal of national life, but also in conflict with the democratic ideal of individual liberty.

Fortunately, the common sense of a majority of the House of Commons prevented, for the moment, the infliction of so singular a misfortune on the country. The danger, however, is not altogether at an end. The spirit of the puritan and the precisian, mixed in not a few cases with the baser element of social or political enmity, has still to be reckoned with, even if for the moment it is somewhat disarmed by the wise efforts employed by the ecclesiastical heads of the Church of England to restrain ritualistic excesses. The question, it is admitted, is left in a state of suspense. And, as it is thus left, one never knows at

what instant, or owing to what unforeseen cause, it may not suddenly assume a pressing importance. It is surely, then, not amiss to make some endeavour to explore the real and ultimate causes of movements which are so capable of engrossing public attention, and to realise the dangers into which we may be led by the adoption of hasty and ill-considered methods of dealing with them. Some years ago,<sup>1</sup> in arguing against the "free-thinker's" rough-and-ready mode of dealing with what he regards as philosophical error in theological guise, the present writer ventured to point out that Ultramontanism was the enemy into whose hands the "free-thinker" was playing, and that the best remedy against the danger thus involved lay in the popularising of the National Church by attracting into it the best intelligence of the country. The warning then given to the philosophic assailants of popular belief may to-day be repeated for the benefit of

<sup>1</sup> *Free-thought and True-thought*. Kegan Paul, Trench, and Co. 1884.

those who assail the Church of England on the score of excesses in doctrine or ritual. They are playing, visibly playing, into the hands of Ultramontaniam. And it is Ultramontaniam—religion seeking to make use of the European tradition to exist for its own sake and to make itself paramount—that is the enemy. It was against this, far more than against any particular doctrine, that England—the England inspired with the first breath of intellectual and maritime expansion—revolted in the first half of the sixteenth century. The assertion of independence that then took place was, indeed, merely the further emphasising of a principle which had more or less animated the Anglican Church from the earliest times, and if the First Prayer-Book of Edward VI. had been left free from the influence of continental reformers it is possible that, its independence being meanwhile assured, the Anglican Church might have been saved from various controversies of later times.

However, the thing happened so, that the influx of Protestant refugees in the reign of

Edward VI., and the influence of the exiles who returned to England after the accession of Elizabeth, gave a special and almost absorbing doctrinal force to a separation which originated in respect of polity. In a doctrinal as well as in a political sense the Papacy became the enemy, the sense of political necessity adding force to doctrinal divergence. The political necessity has disappeared, driven out before those vast national and social changes which have remodelled the map of the world. It was owing to the influence of the political necessity that the Anglican Church in the eighteenth century assumed that extreme Erastian form which was so favourable to the comfort of innumerable Vicars of Bray. It was as a protest against the spiritual deadness caused by the dominance of Erastianism that the great evangelical revival manifested itself through such men as Wesley, Whitefield, and Newton. That the High Church movement was a legitimate outcome of the evangelical movement there can be no question. And the

earnestness of the High Church party—or, as it is perhaps more often called, the ritualistic party—is deserving of all recognition. During the last sixty years it has, through the individual earnestness of its clergy, converted the Church of England from a mere Erastian survival into a living and spiritual force. If the leaders of the party have leaned towards extremes of doctrine, that has only been (as may be seen immediately) by reason of the very conditions in which they have found themselves placed. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the new life they have put into the Church of England has in no sense been accompanied by a narrowing of the comprehensiveness of that Church. While the ritualistic party has been at work on one side, the Broad Church party (to use another old-fashioned expression) has been at work on the other, and has achieved a liberty of creed and criticism which sixty years ago would have been deemed an impossibility. The general result has been the establishment in the Church



of England of a standard of comprehensiveness superior to any that has existed at any previous time in its history, and which may fairly claim to be regarded as national. Obviously, the Church that can include (to select three well-known examples) a Ryle, a Liddon, and a Jowett is built upon foundations that can in no sense be regarded as narrow.

The national comprehensiveness of the Church of England may then be regarded as an accepted fact, and in that national comprehensiveness is to be found one of the main justifications for its existence. Another justification for its existence as a State institution is to be found in the protection which a State institution affords to the man who, holding a ministerial position, may happen to be thinking a little in advance of his time. This, it may be pointed out, was the argument Matthew Arnold always advanced on the side of Establishment—that it protected the best thinkers within it from the hasty judgment of the average church-goer. The judgment of the

man in the pew is not always, perhaps not often, a well-informed judgment. It is a judgment that is liable to take alarm; and, especially, to be swayed by those social considerations which are often so powerful for good and sometimes so powerful for evil. The average man in the pew may not himself, perhaps, object to theological excursions a little beyond the boundaries of the accepted and the usual, but he does not like to be frowned upon by his neighbours as the frequenter of heretical fountains. It may be asserted that the history of Church Establishment, both in England and in Scotland, contains numerous examples of the manner in which a thinker a little more daring than the rest has been able to maintain his ground in spite of popular disapproval until, in course of time, the main body has come up to his advanced post, thus achieving a victory by which all are ultimately the gainers.

Comprehensiveness, however, has difficulties of its own—difficulties which are all the more likely to be felt if limits which are fixed by

theory are habitually exceeded in practice. Account has to be taken of the position in which the Anglican Church found itself when, in the middle of the sixteenth century, it set to work to formulate a basis which, while including the authority of a supernatural sanction, should repudiate the grosser objectivity which had become especially associated with the pressure of the Papacy. The effect of this attempt, upon both the learned and the unlearned, was characteristic; for while the learned acquired a high philosophical justification from the association of the new science of printing with the doctrine of the supreme authority of Scripture, the unlearned, who knew nothing about Scripture or about printing, acquired (as Latimer sadly acknowledged) a moral degradation through the discrediting of their favourite symbols. For the moment, the divines of the Anglican Church succeeded in hitting upon a satisfactory compromise, avoiding the superstitions of too great an objectivity on the one side and the license of too great a

subjectivity on the other, the compromise finding expression in the Thirty-nine Articles. That this compromise was satisfactory for the moment may be admitted. Yet no one who comes to the study of the Thirty-nine Articles with an independent mind can fail to be struck by the fact that they represent a position of unstable equilibrium. Take only this one question of sacramental doctrine, on which so much stress is laid. It is the profession and theory of the Church of England that, while it excludes the Roman doctrine on the one side, it excludes also the Zwinglian doctrine on the other. Now it is easy enough to assert this twofold exclusion in words ; but it is logically impossible to think it. For however much you may refine away the doctrine of a Real Presence, however much you may make it ultimately depend on the faith of the recipient, you logically admit the Romanist view as soon as ever you assert the sacerdotal power of the act of consecration to effect a change in the elements. On the other hand, the moment

you deny the existence of that power, you logically accept the purely commemorative doctrine of the Zwinglian school. Hence it follows that those whose minds lead them to sympathise with the sacerdotal idea find themselves insensibly landed in Romanism, while those who repudiate the sacerdotal idea find themselves insensibly landed in Zwinglianism. Each of these systems claims adherence, because each is consistent and logical in itself. The ritualistic party are really at heart, whether they acknowledge it or not, Romanists; the Low Church and Broad Church parties are at heart, whether they acknowledge it or not, Zwinglians. And thus both, while claiming to be within the Anglican Church, are both, if the most widely accepted authorities are followed, really outside it.

Considerations of this kind may well be suggestive of the virtue of infinite patience, especially patience with those who, even if disposed to run into extremes of sacerdotal doctrine, have shown themselves so admirably

alive to the discharge of spiritual and philanthropic duty. Clearly, it would be a thousand pities if, in their zeal to root up the tares of ritual, Protestant stalwarts were to root up the wheat of good works. One may say even more than this in the cause of patience. It is reasonable to hold that, having regard to the very comprehensiveness of the Church of England, the movement towards the Romanist solution of the Anglican compromise was bound to come as soon as ever the Church had shaken off the Erastian deadness of last century, and as soon as ever the free individual earnestness of the Evangelical revival, centering always in subjective impressions, had worked itself out. No, it is certainly not by parliamentary repression that any excess in the direction of sacerdotalism can be dealt with, nor should we for a moment adopt a policy which would inevitably lead to the formidable reinforcement of the Ultramontane enemy. What seems most calculated to prove an effectual corrective is the widening of the

boundaries of the Anglican Church at the other end, so that it may include not only those who believe in a rational, as opposed to a sacerdotal, Christianity, but also those whose dissents lie rather in the sphere of ecclesiastical organisation than of theologic conception. There is no reason why the attempt made by Archbishop Stillingfleet in the seventeenth century should not be renewed, possibly with greater success, in the twentieth. Nor is there any logical reason why the clerical profession should not be made more valuable, be placed more abreast of the professions of law and medicine, by raising the standard of qualification. If it were found, as it would be found, that this raising of the standard of qualification involved parallel reforms in respect of the equalisation of the value of clerical appointments and the process of accession thereto, so much the better.

The question of the moment, however, is that of the possibility of a rational, as opposed to a sacerdotal, Christianity. That there should

be an absolutely rational Christianity — a Christianity founded upon pure reason — is perhaps hardly possible. Religion has to do with matters of sentiment, of association, of emotion ; pure reason has to do with matters capable, as it may be said, of mathematical proof. Pure reason concerns itself with the knowable ; religion concerns itself with that side of human nature which lies open to the touch of the unknowable. But although an absolutely rational Christianity, founded upon pure reason, is neither possible nor desirable, we may yet have a Christianity which is so far in touch with the ordinary and everyday thoughts and interests of life as to acquire and preserve the same element of reality as belongs to those everyday thoughts and interests. That this cannot be said of sacerdotal Christianity need hardly be argued. The ideas that are involved in sacerdotal Christianity stand entirely apart from the everyday and ordinary thoughts and interests of life. It is, perhaps, one of their boasts that they do



thus stand apart. But what is the result? The result is, and must be in an increasing degree, a divorce of religion from actual life, just such a divorce as is to be noted in some continental countries, in which one half of the population, principally women, give themselves up to religious guidance, while the other half of the population, principally men, reject religion altogether. Could anything be imagined more disastrous for the general health of national life, more disastrous for the general cause of social morality?

That we are in England approaching some such result as this is only too deeply to be feared. Not very long ago episcopal allusion was made to the fact—a fact which was characterised as “*sad and terrible*”—that out of every thousand young men in England nine hundred never attend any place of worship. That fact, if it is a fact, is capable of being regarded as “*sad and terrible*” in a sense quite different from that intended by the authority quoted. Why is it that ninety per cent of the male half

of the rising generation never attend a place of worship? Is it not that the Churches are in fault? Why have they never sought to attract this worshipless ninety per cent? The Churches are surely made for men, and not men for the Churches; and if the men of the rising generation will have nothing to do with the Churches it is the Churches that must stand condemned. The Churches, it may reasonably be held, fail to attract because they divorce themselves from the realities of life, and the bishops (or the great majority of them) fail to perceive this because they themselves live and move in an unreal and artificial atmosphere—an atmosphere as unreal as would surround our lawyers if *they admitted the existence of nothing later than the statutes of Elizabeth*; an atmosphere as unreal as would surround our doctors if they tied themselves down to the principles of Dr. Sangrado. It is perhaps a little singular that the complaint above mentioned should have been made by a bishop whose sphere of work lies within the metropolitan area, and who has

existing almost at his very door an organisation which is, to those included in it, a real and living religion. If he happened to be present at one of the Sunday evening meetings of the Social Democratic Federation he would find a body of people bringing into their day of rest an echo, and more than an echo, of the principles which appeal to them through their days of labour. He would find them singing, with thorough heartiness and conviction, hymns in celebration of that liberty and social justice which, after all, constitute so large a part of the Christian tradition. He would find children of all ages brought up in this social democratic faith, believing in it, penetrated by it, seeking to realise it, not as a matter of fashionable practice or of archæological survival, but as a matter of everyday life. Finding this, a little reflection might tell him that these members of the Social Democratic Federation are occupying in the nineteenth century very much the position occupied by the earliest Christian converts in the first century, and

that, as a consequence, if organised Christianity now is to compete with the Social Democratic Federation for popular acceptance, it must make itself as real as the principles which the Social Democratic Federation represents. It need not be held, of course, that those principles cover the whole ground with which religion may have to do; they do not. But they cover no inconsiderable part of it, and, moreover, present themselves to the minds of those who entertain them in a guise which goes far to endow them with the warmth of a religious sentiment.

It would be absurd, and worse, in seeking to account for the want of harmony between accepted religious ideals and the actual facts of to-day to accuse sixteenth-century theologians of a want of intellectual capacity. The age which produced the Thirty-nine Articles produced also such men as Sidney, Shakspeare, and Bacon. It was essentially a learned and intellectual age, and to reproach its theologians for the results they arrived at would be no

more just than it would be to reproach Columbus for having discovered America in a 100-ton caravel instead of in a 5000-ton steamer. It would be worse than unjust; it would be suicidal. After all, human life and human society depend, in all ages, upon the capacity of human intelligence to deal with facts as it knows them, and to assume a condition of intellectual incapacity in the sixteenth century might well make us fearful lest a similar state of intellectual incapacity might exist in the twentieth. The position has undergone a change, not by reason of an advance in intellectual capacity, but by reason of the discovery and realisation of new facts. The immense extension which our knowledge of the universe has undergone—an extension in respect both of space and time—has rendered altogether inadequate those conceptions of the origin and direction of the universe which commended themselves to the mind of the sixteenth-century philosopher. The growth of this knowledge has been slow,

and still more slow has been the realisation of its logical results. Its growth for some time escaped attention because for two centuries and more political necessity gave an artificial importance to purely theological controversy. Within the last three-quarters of a century, however, the pressure of political necessity has almost entirely disappeared, while the growth of knowledge has become more and more organised. And hence suddenly—to speak in this way of a situation which has been more or less apparent for fifty years past—the English world finds itself so placed that unless it can take refuge in a return upon authority, it will have to completely reconstruct its religious ideals, or possibly go without such ideals altogether.

There is much to be said for the return upon authority—more to be said, indeed, than many might be disposed to admit. The great, the overwhelming objection to such a return is to be found in the social and moral danger it involves through the splitting of society into

two alien, if not hostile, camps—the camp of those, principally women, who give themselves up to religious guidance, and the camp of those, principally men, who reject religion altogether. The danger is made all the greater by reason of the necessity imposed upon both parties for continually drawing their fortifications closer and closer. The principle of authority becomes more and more intolerant of the intrusion of reason; the principle of reason becomes more and more impatient of the intrusion of imagination. In either case, and quite apart from the social dislocation that results, the view of human existence must become cramped and narrowed. Life loses its dignity, and becomes liable to fall a prey to fanaticism on the one hand or to absolute scepticism, moral as well as philosophical, on the other. Yet there is nothing in our more recently acquired knowledge that need conduct us to either conclusion. If we have dethroned that sixteenth-century conception of the universe which represented it, so far as human action is concerned, as a sort

of stage, with Divine Powers seated in the flies and obscure passions moving about in the cellarage, we have got something in its place infinitely grander, infinitely more marvellous, infinitely more inexplicable, infinitely more calculated to appeal to that feeling of reverence—reverence towards ourselves and to things without ourselves—which we know to be linked with the best of which we are capable. The conception of the universe as dependent on the will and the wisdom of an all-powerful Personality was a comparatively simple matter; the facts of the universe as made known by scientific investigation present a picture of the utmost complexity. The barest statement of the scope and functions of the solar energy, for example, far transcends in grandeur the highest flights of the most enthusiastic Theism. It is in a large degree the sense of this disproportion that drives many, who are sensible of the need for some foot-hold for the imagination, to make a return upon authority, and to find in religion a supernatural force in the midst of, though



apart from, the forces of nature. Herein lies the strength, never to be depreciated, of Ultramontanism, of religion existing for the sake of religion and seeking to become paramount. And Ultramontanism will infallibly grow, in more and more sharp antagonism with a crystallising scepticism, unless some scope can be found for the exercise of imagination, for the influence of emotion, which, while in rational harmony with the best that is known in the world, will act as a ready stimulant to social and individual duty.

It is perhaps as well to admit that this task is not likely to be an easy or simple one. Religion is so much a matter of association that a sense of irreligion is liable to attach itself to even a slight attempt to re-state an undeniable proposition. And it is not desirable to create a sense of irreligion. Far from this, what is really desirable is—to use Matthew Arnold's words<sup>1</sup>—to show “that the truth is really, as it is, incomparably higher, grander, more wide

<sup>1</sup> *Literature and Dogma*, p. 347.

and deep-reaching," than the theology which it displaces. Hence the necessity for that infinite patience for which, although in another respect, a plea has already been advanced; hence the necessity for avoiding the least appearance of wantonly destructive criticism; hence the necessity for relying to the full on those gradual and imperceptible changes of feeling and conviction which have been personified in the figure of the "Zeit-geist." The necessity, however, for doing some work of a constructive kind is made vividly manifest in the conditions of that parliamentary hesitation which, luckily, did not result in an attempt to apply the sword of legislation to a perfectly natural and inevitable religious development. For Parliament to attempt to decide between the archæological Catholic on the one hand, and the archæological Erastian and archæological Protestant on the other, would have been to undertake a task for which it was as little qualified as was Gallio to deal with the niceties of Jewish law. Nevertheless the difficulty remains, and must remain so

long as there is a national institution which is out of harmony with considerable sections of national conviction—conviction which includes those Social Democrats who have made gods to go before them, for seven days in the week, out of liberty and social justice. It is impossible to tell at what moment, or through what combination of circumstances, this question may not once more become acute; it is equally impossible to foresee to what conclusions and trains of consequence Parliament might not be hurried. That in the event of anything like disestablishment the Ultramontane idea would be immensely strengthened there can be no doubt, even if at the moment the Anglican Church failed to re-embody itself with the Roman. In the clash of interests and conflict of opinions that would be created, amid the recriminations of theological schools, the laughter of sceptical outsiders, there might well be a chance of all that is best in religion going overboard, leaving us between the equally undesirable extremes of fanaticism become more fanatical, and scepti-

cism, moral as well as religious, become more sceptical.

A key to the solution of the difficulty is to be found, it may be suggested, in the reflection that while the extent of human knowledge varies from century to century, and while the forms of the expression of human feeling change from generation to generation, human nature itself remains very much the same. Matthew Arnold expressed this truth in the following four lines :—

The world but feels the present's spell,  
The poet feels the past as well ;  
Whatever men have done, might do ;  
Whatever thought, might think it too.

Human nature remains more or less a constant quantity, notwithstanding the changes that may be effected in forms of thought and forms of expression. This is true generally ; it is particularly true in the case of the same race at different stages of its mental and moral development. Nearly thirty years ago it occurred to the present writer to point out, in

a lecture on "The Constancy of Religious Character,"<sup>1</sup> that the ruling ideas in the famous mediæval hymn known as the "Dies Iræ" were identical with the main conclusions resulting from an intelligent and impartial consideration of the facts of the universe as at present known—that in both cases one became alive to a conviction of the unfailing certitude of the laws of the universe, to a sense of human littleness in the presence of that universe, to a sense of the preciousness of humanity, and to a strong, yet often struggling belief in the movement of humanity towards some bright and noble destiny. It may not be amiss to supplement that comparison by suggesting that, no matter how completely we may reject the theology of the great evangelical movement of the eighteenth century, the feeling which lay at the root of that movement, and which finds expression in the best of its hymns, was a true feeling, with which it will always be pos-

<sup>1</sup> Published with other lectures, under the title of *From Old to New*, in 1872.

sible for the thoughtful in all generations to sympathise.

But if (it might be argued) human nature is a constant quantity, why not be content to make use, in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, of the forms of expression that arose in the fourteenth or the eighteenth? Why go out of our way to find new forms of phraseology when we have ready to our hand forms which it is admitted are essentially true? The answer to that question is not far to seek. The world lives in the present, is conscious of "the present's spell," and it is only by using the terms of the present that the world can be endowed with a sense of reality. The poet, the man of quick imagination, can place himself in the position of those who lived centuries before him. The poet of to-day can understand the reality that was expressed to the men of the fourteenth century by the grand words of the "Dies Iræ"; he can understand the reality that was expressed to the men of the eighteenth century by the best of the hymn-writers of the

evangelical revival. The world, however, with its limited imagination and in the midst of its multifarious concerns, cannot tread this path with any certainty. It sees the actualities of the present and is possessed by them; whatever does not fit in with the actualities of the present is infected with the taint of unreality. The revelation expressed in modern science—for this is as well worthy to be called a divine revelation as any other—has rendered inadequate existing forms for the expression of eternal truths, and necessitated the adoption of forms more in accordance with man's present estimate of himself and his surroundings. The unity of the universe (to use the expression), the necessity for righteousness, remain just as they were, just as they were expressed in the Hebrew revelation of Monotheism and in the Christian revelation of love as the fulfilling of the law. They need, however, if religion is to be a reality, if it is to avoid being either a hollow formality or an archæological revival, to be expressed in terms which are to the men of the

present generation the terms of reality. It is impossible (to put the matter in this way) to realise God in the present if a determination is maintained always to speak and think of God in terms of the past. To do so, indeed, might seem to be nearly akin to atheism, for it involves the banishment of the enduring divine principle from all that concerns the actual present.

It seems impossible, in such space as is available here, to do more than give the merest hint of all that is involved in this conclusion. The ruling out of the supernatural, as infinitely less wonderful than what is known of the natural; the abandonment, save for literary purposes, of attempts at bolstering up obscure historical authorities; the acceptance of the creeds of the old time as serviceable parables for the new; the strict limitation of those anthropomorphic tendencies which have alternately worked for the comfort and the desolation of mankind—these are results which, being for the most part negative, may be open



to criticism or even denunciation. On the other hand, there is the infinite and inestimable gain resident in the conviction, in the knowledge, that the moral principles in the light of which men live, are, after all, an essential part of that universe whose physical manifestations we have of late laboured so much to explore—that righteousness and charity are as much laws of the universe as the law of gravitation; that equally with their heritage of physical and intellectual endowments men are in possession of a dower of moral principle

Far-dated from that twilight time  
When suns were forming and when worlds were weighed ;

that in man's oneness with nature is to be found the promise of yet unfulfilled possibilities ; that, believing in the fact of his own volition as "counting for something" in the vast mazes of causation, man may work, as one who is human, for all who are human, leaving the great insoluble problems of the universe to rest where they are, to fill him with a sense of their majesty, to humble

him with a sense of their immensity, to render him confident that he, too, as a portion, a fragment, of that universe, is in the everlasting arms of laws that fail not, of forces that swerve not, of purposes which, though hidden from him, he cannot but trust, because it is in the following of those purposes that he exists, that he thinks, that he is happy.

We want the imagination of the poet, it may be said, to help us here. That is true. Just as we need the imagination of the poet to help us to realise the life of the past, so the imagination of the poet can help us to appreciate better the realities of the present. And the poets have come in to help us Clough, Arnold, and Tennyson, perhaps most especially the first-named, have done much—much that is as yet only faintly appreciated—to enable the men of this generation to feel the grandeur of the realities of existence, even though

Faith and form  
Be sundered in the night of fear.

It is from Tennyson that we may learn to look for a growth of reverence commensurate with the growth of knowledge. It is by Clough that we are reminded of the sacredness of silence in respect of those convictions which lie deepest in our nature. And it is by Arnold, whose *Literature and Dogma* is still the last word in the great biblical controversy, that we are never allowed to lose sight of the method and secret of Jesus as containing the true and only solution of the problem of human conduct. It is there that is to be found, at least so far as Europe is concerned, that "ideal of conduct made precious by association" which, because a moral, is therefore a scientific necessity.

X

ON THE STUDY OF THE  
ATONEMENT

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## ON THE STUDY OF THE ATONEMENT

THE Atonement, as understood theologically, does not stand alone; for the "Scheme of Redemption," as it has been called, is based upon the "Fall of Man," as having been a true and historical event. As long as the account in Genesis iii. was believed to be a representation of what really took place, there appeared to be some basis of fact; but this has now been disposed of by the following considerations.

(1) The discovery of the libraries of the kings' palaces at Nineveh, etc., has revealed the fact that the cosmogony of Genesis is only one, or rather two combined, out of, perhaps, many similar inventions, differing, however, in


their being polytheistic instead of monotheistic, as is that in Genesis. Moreover, some of these accounts agree so closely in many particulars—especially, perhaps, in the details of the Flood—that it is obvious that they have been derived from some earlier and common source.

(2) The abundant evidence of the existence of prehistoric man in wellnigh all quarters of the globe, proves him to have been in a uniformly low level of barbarism for an incalculable length of time ; for the vast antiquity of the human race is seen in the all but undeniable proofs of his preglacial existence. Even if the data be contested, his appearance so soon after the glacial epoch proves that he must have been in existence elsewhere during that period, if he were not in the northern colder regions, where evidence of glaciation abounds.

(3) The study of the anatomy of the human body reveals the existence of numerous distinct and rudimentary organs, the use of which in a

fully developed state is obvious only in other animals.

(4) Embryology proves that man passes, during the foetal condition, through representative stages of that of a fish, an amphibian, and of a mammal ; and finally leaving that of the primates, he is evolved as a human being.

Embryology and anatomy thus prove incontestibly man's descent from a common stem with the primates ; which issued on the one hand in man, and on the other in the existing anthropoid apes, like the two arms of the letter Y. 

(5) Physiology shows that a gradual decay and death of the body are as inevitable and necessary a part of man's terrestrial economy as is his growth and development. If it be asked why man and animals die a natural death, the answer appears to be that as soon as adult *growth* is reached, nothing but continual *renovation* takes place ; but as this process is never actually equivalent to the first growth to maturity, the machine gradually



wears out under the constant "patching," so to say.

(6) As the death of the body in all men could not possibly follow the mere eating by Adam and Eve of any non-poisonous fruit—if such be supposed to have been the physiological or secondary cause of universal bodily death in Man—so, too, in the moral sphere, their sin of disobedience could not be the cause of any such consequences or punishments as original sin and death of the soul in their descendants; for as Ezekiel *e.g.* has expressly pointed out, no man shall die for the iniquity of his father but only for his own. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son."<sup>1</sup>

The conception of original sin, therefore, as represented in all men by an inclination to disobey law, and as having been presumably derived from Adam and Eve, has no foundation in facts.

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xviii. 17, 20.

Instead of asserting that primitive man *fell*, it would be nearer the truth to say that he *had not yet risen* to the conception of duty as shown by a willing obedience to law.

The wish to have everything one's own way was doubtless the natural condition of the childhood of the race, just as it is that of the individual. As a child must be disciplined, so the race had to be educated to civilisation, and finally to Christianity, *i.e.* the highest form of personal character and social humanity possible; and this could only be done by a regeneration of the world.

That a son may suffer, not only in the loss of property, but in health and even moral strength, from the iniquity of his father, is only too true. Hereditary taint is a sad thing, as we see in drunkenness; but it is entirely a misnomer to call it *sin*, original or otherwise, when it is brought on one through the folly or wickedness of another.

Thus, then, do we discover that the very foundation-stones of the superstructure, known

as the Scheme of Redemption, are non-existent. The account in the third chapter of Genesis is simply an imaginary drama, illustrating an early conception of the discovery of conscience and the foundation of the moral law in obedience to authority,

It was too early a period to understand that the origin of moral evil arises from *within* the heart of man and not from *without*; so the tempter is represented as an external being.<sup>1</sup>

The New Testament furnishes the last act of the drama in the supposed expiation and atonement wrought by Jesus Christ on the cross; by which the wrath of God was believed to be appeased, His righteousness justified, and His justice satisfied; and thus man was saved, if he believed this, from perishing everlastingly.

Thus became established as a theological dogma the so-called "Covenant of Works," to be superseded by the "Covenant of Grace." As briefly illustrating these we may take the

<sup>1</sup> Comp. Matt. xv. 16-20; James i. 14, 15.

following questions from the Venerable John Sinclair's *Questions Illustrating the Catechism of the Church of England*.

"Where did God place our first parents? He made a covenant with them; what is a covenant? What was God's threatening to them in case they broke the covenant? What blessings did they forfeit? (*Ans.*) The promised happiness and immortality. What are the evil consequences of the Fall in this life to mankind? (*Ans.*) Sickness, pain, death, grief, shame, and remorse. What are the privileges of the Christian covenant? (*Ans.*) To be a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. What is the consequence to the Christian of renouncing Christianity? (*Ans.*) He is put out of Christ's protection, ceases to be a member of the Church, loses all the privileges of Christianity and is ruined everlastingly."

Let us investigate the source of this Scheme of Redemption which involves these two Covenants.

The most important passage upon which it was most probably based, is in the Epistle to the Romans.<sup>1</sup> "Therefore, as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned:—for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law."

In other words, St. Paul means that acts become sinful the moment they are forbidden; but they cannot be so, and are therefore not immoral, but simply non-moral, as long as they have not been authoritatively forbidden; though the consequences—say, death from inebriety—will be precisely the same.

"For if by the trespass of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many." He here wants to show that salvation is open to all men. No one would have known of it if Jesus had not come, who should "save men from their sins."

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 12 ff.

The actual facts, however, concerning the "one man," Adam, are imaginary. St. Paul is endeavouring to draw out a parallel between physical together with moral death, which he regards as having been brought into the world through the guilt of Adam, and their opposite, viz. spiritual life, a free gift of Christ to mankind. So he takes the Fall as if it had been actual history.<sup>1</sup> We may accept in a general way the conclusion of his argument, though some materials of his logic may be incorrect. There is no want of evidence to show that man has gone astray; but it was not an inevitable consequence of any so-called original sin derived from Adam and Eve. Such appears to have been the origin of the doctrine of the Atonement which lies at the foundation of the Covenant of Grace.

We must now address ourselves to a consideration of this doctrine as generally held; though it will be needless to specify the multi-

<sup>1</sup> Similarly our Lord drew a parallel between the unhistorical story of Jonah and His own death.

tudinous forms in which it has been presented by various writers from the fourth century until to-day.

There are certain words by which the Atonement has been expressed. They are sacrifice, expiation, propitiation, oblation, and satisfaction; while the result to mankind has been described as redemption, justification, sanctification, and salvation.

The first observation is that these are all Latin words and are to be found in the Vulgate; but they have not always Greek equivalents in the New Testament.

When the expiatory theory of Christ's death became formulated in the Western Church, a knowledge of the Greek language was almost if not quite in abeyance. At all events the Vulgate was, so to say, the text-book of theologians. It is desirable to consider each of these terms and see how far the original scriptures support their usage.

**SACRIFICE.**—As an example of a passage treating of Christ's death which seems to carry

support to the conception of a sacrificial atonement, St. Paul speaks of it as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odour of a sweet smell."<sup>1</sup>

This metaphor is taken from the sacrifices of roast meat offered to the ancestral gods by heathens or from the Jewish ritual. Thus, in one of the histories of the flood found on the Assyrian tablets, Hasisadra, the hero of the flood, sacrifices at its close, just as Noah is described as doing in Genesis. He says: "The gods gathered at the smell, yea, the gods gathered at the savour; like flies they gathered at the sacrifice."

Of course "the odour of a sweet smell" represents our Lord's loving, willing self-sacrifice for man. Hence the word has passed over into its Christian and spiritual usage: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God."<sup>2</sup> St. Paul also describes the charitable gifts

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 1.



received from the Philippians as "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable."<sup>1</sup> St. Peter, too, bids his readers to "offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

Hence the application is a purely spiritual one; and such, too, was the invariable application of the term by the ante-Nicene Fathers of the first three centuries.

EXPIATION and PROPITIATION.—The first is of frequent use in the Vulgate, as for example: "Decimo die mensis hujus septimi, dies *expiationum* erit celeberrimus . . . omne opus servile non facietis in tempore diei hujus; quia dies *propitiationis* est."<sup>3</sup> It does not occur in the New Testament where "propitiation" is found: "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being *justified* freely by His grace through the *redemption* that is in Christ Jesus: whom God set forth [to be] a *propitiation*, through faith."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 18.      <sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 5.      <sup>3</sup> Lev. xxiii. 27, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. iii. 25; see also 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10, and Heb. ii. 17.

This word is metaphorically used as a figure of the sin-offering of the Old Testament.

With regard to the scriptural use of the words *ἰλάσκεσθαι* and *ἰλασμός*, I cannot do better than reproduce Dr. Westcott's observations on their usage. After quoting all the passages where the words occur in the LXX. he says: "These constructions stand in remarkable contrast with the classical and Hellenistic usage in which the accusative of the person propitiated is the normal construction from Homer downwards; a usage which prevails in patristic writers.

"They show that the scriptural conception of *ἰλάσκεσθαι* is not that of appeasing one who is angry with a personal feeling against the offender, but of altering the character of that which from without occasions a necessary alienation, and interposes an inevitable obstacle to fellowship. Such phrases as 'propitiating God' and God 'being reconciled' are foreign to the language of the New Testament. Man is reconciled (2 Cor. v. 18 ff.; Rom. v. 10 f.).

There is a 'propitiation' in the matter of the sin or of the sinner; the love of God is the same throughout; but He 'cannot' in virtue of His very nature welcome the impenitent and sinful; and more than this, He 'cannot' treat sin as if it were not sin.

"This being so, the *ἱλασμός*, when it is applied to the sinner, so to speak, neutralises the sin."<sup>1</sup>

If we might substitute "mercy" for the objectionable term "propitiation," we should only be following the expression used by the publican in the temple, when he cried, "God, be merciful to me (*ἰλάσθητί μοι*) a sinner," by saying, "Christ is mercy itself to us."<sup>2</sup>

OBLATION.—This is derived from the Vulgate, though *sacrificium* is also used where our A.V. has "oblation." The word, however, does not occur in the New Testament, there-

<sup>1</sup> *The Epistles of St. John*, p. 87. For the various translations of these two Greek words in the Bibles of the sixteenth century, I would refer the reader to my work *The At-one-ment* (G. Stoneman, 1s.).

<sup>2</sup> Luke xviii. 13.

fore it has no scriptural authority for its application to Christ.

SATISFACTION.—This has a long history. It does not appear at all in the R.V., for in the only passage where it occurred in the A.V.<sup>1</sup> it is now replaced by “ransom.”

The first Christian writer who made use of the term was Tertullian, early in the third century ; but he only employed it in speaking of penitents, and not of Christ's work. The word was unknown to the ante-Nicene Fathers, and there is no Greek word corresponding with it. Oxenham in his important work<sup>2</sup> says, in summing up the main points of teaching on Christ's work of redemption to be gathered from the patristic literature of the first three centuries : “There is no trace of the notion of vicarious satisfaction in the sense of our sins being imputed to Christ, and His obedience imputed to us, which some of the Reformers made the very essence of Christianity.”

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xxxv, 31, 32.

<sup>2</sup> *The Catholic Doctrine of the Atonement*, 3rd ed. p. 128.

The theory of satisfaction was scholastic, and not brought into prominence till the fourth and fifth centuries at the earliest.

The doctrine of satisfaction was first expressly taught by Anselm, who laid down the primary fact, *i.e.* as he thought, that, the human race being steeped in sin, man *must* "either make an adequate satisfaction to God or endure the penalty."<sup>1</sup> The omission in Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo*, which the author completely overlooks, is that *forgiveness on sincere repentance excludes punishment*. The "must-be-punished" theory was Judaistic, but the "need-not-be-punished" is Christian—as our Lord so graphically taught us by the parable of the Prodigal Son.

According to Anselm, however, "the satisfaction to be equal to the sin, must be greater than anything outside God, and therefore only God can supply it; but it must be paid by man, or it is not man's satisfaction. . . . Hence the necessity for the Incarnation. But the Incar-

<sup>1</sup> Oxenham, *op. cit.* p. 184.

nation would not suffice of itself. . . . His death as a voluntary offering is the sufficient and only possible satisfaction, which not only equals, but infinitely exceeds, the payment owed for the sins of the whole world. . . . He claimed, therefore, as a reward, the salvation of those for whom He died. And thus mercy and justice are reconciled."<sup>1</sup>

To this Abelard made the acute observation that Adam's sin, however great, could not be atoned by the yet greater crime of those who murdered Christ. Anselm's theory passed with modifications on to Wiclif and Calvin, and we may say to the present day.

Reasoners like Hooker, Butler, and Archbishop Magee, as well as later writers, have noted that nowhere in the New Testament is it stated *how* or in what manner the efficacy of Christ's death is conveyed, or of what it consists. They insist on the *fact* of the Atonement alone.

The fallacy, however, which lies at the root

<sup>1</sup> Oxenham, *op. cit.* p. 184.

of all theories of satisfaction, is that they arise from a belief in the Fall of Adam and Eve. But as this is now seen to be unhistorical, every theory based upon it falls to the ground ; and all ideas of the merits of Christ's death being imparted or imputed or of anything else being *conveyed* to man, thereby, so as to establish his justification, is groundless. It arises from the old mistake of supposing good and evil to come from *without*, instead of realising what Christ was constantly insisting upon, that all moral good and moral evil issue out of the heart and from *within*.

If the sinner repent, *then*, by a natural law—God's own law—his *repentance cancels the past* ; even though he repent seventy times seven.

From the preceding observations we now see that such expressions in the New Testament as "sacrifice," "propitiation," or of Christ's "bearing our sins," etc., are metaphorical only, being adaptations from heathen and Jewish modes of speech. For, as Dr. Westcott

explains, it is the *sinner*, not God, that has to be approached and satisfied ; and this was done by our Lord Himself by means of His willing, self-sacrificing love for man. "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Myself."<sup>1</sup>

There could not, therefore, have been any expiation or atonement, in the ordinary sense of the word, for man's sin at all. Inasmuch as, when Christ came, the majority of men did not even know what *sin* really meant. Men's lives, their religion and worship, were all faulty. With the great mass of the Jews,<sup>2</sup> religion consisted of ritual, ceremonial offerings, and perfunctory moral behaviour, but chiefly of a negative character according to the burden of the Decalogue, "Thou shalt not—;" and if positive, as in almsgiving, then the Rabbis considered the mere act itself, irrespective of any motive, could be especially rewarded.

With the Gentiles, religion was also entirely ritual and often highly immoral as well.

<sup>1</sup> John xii. 32.

<sup>2</sup> See Mark vii. 3, 4.



The origin of the word "religion" itself betrays its original application; for according to Cicero<sup>1</sup> it is derived from *religere*, i.e. "to collect repeatedly," and referred presumably to the offerings of the suppliants which the priest had to present to appease the god. So too *θρησκεία* had also only the signification of ritual worship.

Christ, however, has replaced both by elevating conduct to be practical religion, while ritual is confined to worship.

It is worth observing that, corresponding to this ignorance of sin, neither Jew nor Gentile had any word to express it, simply because their conceptions of God would not admit of it. Jehovah was a judge in the eyes of the Jew; and a judge only recognises *guilt*, but knows nothing of sin in a court of law. The Psalmists and Prophets approached nearer to a true conception of sin; but it was not so with the ordinary Jew. The words translated "sin," whether in Hebrew or Greek, meant primarily

<sup>1</sup> *Nat. Deor.* ii. 28.

"missing one's aim," and do not necessarily imply *conscientiousness*. Sin requires a keen conscience and is felt in the heart, because the conception of God must be the highest possible. Guilt is only ashamed of itself when found out.

As there was no word for "sin" neither was there for "conscience." The Greek word, *συνειδησις*, first appears in St. Paul's epistles; and the only place recorded of its use elsewhere, is in a fragment of the Poet Menander. As St. Paul quotes a line, "Evil communications corrupt good manners," from him, it is possible that he adopted this word as well from the same author. It at least shows that the conscience, though of course existent,<sup>1</sup> had not been realised as a definitely formulated emotion until it became so under Christianity. The verb *οὐ συνειδέναι* only signified "to know anything against oneself," and St. Paul uses it in this sense.<sup>2</sup>

Our word is derived from *conscientia*, which

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 4.

primarily signified "consciousness," but had acquired the meaning of "conscience" in Cicero's time.

REDEMPTION.—This word is the usual term as descriptive of the effects of Christ's death with writers of the seventeenth century, who rarely speak of the Atonement. The word is derived from *redimere*, and therefore conveys the idea of "buying back." But it had another meaning, "to rescue"; and when this is effected by suffering of the rescuer, such was metaphorically spoken of as the "price paid."<sup>1</sup>

In Hebrew there are the two words *gulah* and *padah* and in Greek *λυτρόω* and *λύτρωσις* as well as the verb *ἐξαγοράζω*.<sup>2</sup> They all have the primary meaning of buying with money, etc., and secondarily to rescue with or without suffering. It would seem from the history of the word "redemption," in an ecclesiastical

<sup>1</sup> e.g. "Eum suo sanguine ab Acheronte redimere" (Nep. *Dion.* x. 2); "Redimite armis civitatem, quam auro majores vestri redemerunt" (Liv. ix. 4).

<sup>2</sup> Lit. "to acquire out of the forum"; Eph. v. 16, "Redeeming the time"; Gal. iii. 13, "Christ hath redeemed us."

sense, that the Church regarded it as signifying "buying back" with a price paid, rather than as "rescuing" with suffering by the rescuer. Hence arose the various theories endeavouring to explain to whom the price was paid. Both Satan and God have at different times been pronounced to be the receiver of the price, who was supposed to be satisfied with Christ's blood, which thus repurchased the human race.

Modern exegesis, however, regards the secondary and metaphorical meaning as being the correct one of the original Hebrew and Greek terms. Thus Dr. Westcott writes: "The conception of 'redemption' lies in the history of Israel. The deliverance from Egypt furnished the imagery of hope. To this the work of Christ offered the perfect spiritual antitype. This parallel is of importance, for it will be obvious from the usage of the LXX. that the idea of a ransom received by the power from which the captive is delivered is practically lost in *λυτροῦσθαι*, etc. It cannot be said that God paid to the Egyptian oppressor

any price for the redemption of His people. On the other hand, the idea of the exertion of a mighty force, the idea that the 'redemption' costs much, is everywhere present. The force may be represented by divine might, or love, or self-sacrifice, which become finally identical. But there is no thought of any power which can claim from God what is not according to the original ordinance of His righteous compassion."<sup>1</sup>

"The Christian," Dr. Westcott adds, "is bought at the price of Christ's blood for God. He is Christ's bond-servant, and at the same time God's son by adoption. They that have been purchased have a work for others; they are the first-fruits to God and the Lamb."

Thus the imagery of redemption or the bestowal of freedom by rescue is carried over from the Old to the New Testament. In Isaiah we read: "Zion shall be redeemed [set free from the legalism which kills the con-

<sup>1</sup> *On Hebrews*, p. 296.

sciencé] with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." <sup>1</sup>

What is the result? It is that the Gospel is one of "perfect freedom." "Faith overcometh the world, and truth shall make you free;" "ye shall be made free," <sup>2</sup> etc. Many are the passages which speak of the Church and of individuals being now free from the thralldom of sin, and from the letter of the law which killeth. Such is the "redemption" which Christ has "purchased" with the "price" of His blood.

JUSTIFICATION.—A long history might be written about this word; but it simply means the state of a repentant sinner. The prodigal son, when he came to himself and stood before his father, was "justified," a legal term signifying "acquitted."

SANCTIFICATION. — The "becoming holy," the life-long process of working out one's own salvation, the rising step by step, adding virtue to virtue, till the Christian life approximates

<sup>1</sup> Isa. i. 27.

<sup>2</sup> John viii. 32, 33, 36.

perfection, *i.e.* the full measure of the stature of Christ or the perfection of character, as our heavenly Father is perfect—and that is SALVATION as far as it can be gained in this world.

ATONEMENT.—We must now address ourselves to the consideration of this important word, which came to replace the old word “expiation,” derived from the Vulgate.

When the Bible was translated into English in the sixteenth century by Tyndale, 1526, and by Coverdale, 1535, and others, those authors and subsequent translators adopted mainly the two words “atonement” and “reconciliation” in passages where *expiatio* or the verb *expio* and some others stood for the Hebrew *kaphar*, which means “to appease” and “to cover.”

As an illustrative passage we may take the following from Exodus.<sup>1</sup> The translation is Coverdale's: “Seuen dayes shalt thou fyll their handes and offer a bullock daylie for a synne offeringe, because of them that shal be reconcyled. And thou shalt halowe the altare,

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xxix. 36, 37.

when thou reconcylest it, and shalt anoynte it, that it may be consecrated. Seuen days shalt thou reconcyle the altare and consecrate it, that it may be an altare of the Most Holy. Who so wyll touch the altare must be consecrated."

In Taverner's Bible, 1551, a verse in Numbers explains the meaning of "atonement":<sup>1</sup> "The priest shal make an attonement for the soule that sinneth unwittingly wyth the syn-offering before the Lorde, and make him at one, and it shal be forgiuen hym."

The word "atonement," *i.e.* at-one-ment, had no other meaning than "reconciliation" until about the middle of the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup>

In the Genevan Bible, 1560, we seem to trace Calvin's hand, for a marginal explanation to the verse from Exodus runs thus: "To appease God's wrath that sinne may be par-

<sup>1</sup> Numb. xv. 28.

<sup>2</sup> I must refer the reader to my little book on this subject for further details, *The At-one-ment or the Gospel of Reconciliation* (G. Stoneman, 1s.).



done;” and this agrees very closely with the following words occurring in Calvin’s *Constitutions*, etc. (i. 17. 1): “To appease the wrath of God, and with His obedience to put away our offences.”

The Bishop’s Bible, 1568, copies the Genevan, but adds to the marginal note “the sacrifice of expiation.”

The A.V. and R.V. use “atonement” throughout. That “at-one-ment” was the meaning in the A.V. (1611) seems to be the case from the following passage written in 1609. It is from *A learned and excellent Treatise containing all the principal Grounds of Christian Religion*, by Stephen Egerton: “It is to be marked how neere an atonement God hath entred into with us by Christ; in whom the parties at variance be so inseparably joined together . . . and to unite us neerly with Himselfe.”

Instead, therefore, of speaking of the Doctrine of the Atonement, I would suggest the restoration of its original meaning of At-

one-ment, and as a synonym, the "Gospel of Reconciliation."

The At-one-ment was fourfold in its character :—

1. It is identical with the Incarnation. It was thought by men of old that God, who lived in the high and holy place and inhabiteth eternity,<sup>1</sup> was far too distant to hold direct communion with man; and it was only by means of emissaries from before His throne that He could transmit His commands. But by taking our nature upon Him, Jesus Christ "atoned"<sup>2</sup> God and man, and while calling Himself the Son of Man He did not hesitate to say: "I and My Father are one;" "He who hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" "Before Abraham was, I am." Thus was God "in Christ, reconciling, *i.e.* at-one-ing, the world unto Himself, and not reckoning their sins unto them."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lvii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Rich. II.* i. 1, "Since we can not atone you"; *Othello*, iv. 1, "I would do much to atone them."

<sup>3</sup> The reader will find Christ's divine nature fully established in *Christ, No Product of Evolution* (G. Stoneman, 1s.).

The second At-one-ment was the union between man and Himself: "In that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and ye in Me, and I in you;" "I am the vine, ye are the branches," etc.

Thirdly, the At-one-ment between man and man was effected. This is a result of uniting all men to Himself, so that they become brothers in the Lord and adopted sons of God the Father. So that "there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, male and female: for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, Christ has proved how man can be atoned to his life and duty upon earth, and so be at peace with himself, by taking His yoke upon him, when he will find the burden of life to be light.

SALVATION.—What then is salvation, the final result to man? It is the perfection of his own personal character; it is the apprehension of Christ, as St. Paul says, or the arriving at

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 28.

the full measure of the stature of Christ. And the means by which a man must work out his own salvation is simply his religion : by doing his duty to himself in "keeping unspotted from the world," and his duty to his neighbours by a willing self-sacrifice on their behalf, illustrated by St. James by "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction."<sup>1</sup>

The parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates the first. There was no atonement, no expiation, no satisfaction required, only sincere repentance ; and instantaneous forgiveness followed. The parable of the Good Samaritan—a Christian without knowing it—illustrates the duty to others.

What is the final reward ?

"Come, ye blessed of My Father . . . for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink. . . . For verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these My brethren, even these least, ye did it unto Me."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James i. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxv. 40.



# XI

## CONCLUSION

BY THE REV. R. F. HORTON, M.A.



## CONCLUSION

NOWHERE is a greater flood of light shed upon the important distinction between the Christian religion and the dogmatic form in which it is invested than in the eloquent and fascinating work of M. Sabatier, *Esquisse d'une Philosophie de la Religion*. In this connection we may with advantage adopt the language with which Comte has made us familiar, and separate between the positive and the metaphysical elements in Christianity. The positive elements are the facts of the Christian Revelation; the metaphysical elements are the theories, the dogmas in which from age to age the attempt has been made to state, to correlate, and to interpret the facts. So long as the metaphysics are in



harmony with the mental and spiritual furniture of an age all is well. But when the human mind rapidly expands, when new regions of truth are opened to it, and when thought has to readjust itself to widened knowledge, it is likely, and indeed certain, that the metaphysical investiture of a religion will become inadequate. There are slits and tears; or if the garment is too tough to tear, the religion within is crushed and even stifled.

Now it is only given to the student and the thinker to recognise how much of current religious opinion belongs to the substance of the religion and how much to the integument. To the ordinary and unthinking mind the two are inseparable. The dress is part of the form; to change, to readjust, or even to criticise the dress is to attack the religion itself.

There are two works which have made the task of discrimination more possible for the lay mind, and to them much of the growing enlightenment is due. Harnack, in

his *History of Dogma*, and Principal Fairbairn, in his vivid and moving study, *The Place of Christ in Modern Theology*, have traced the action of outward circumstances upon the primitive "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints." The Gospel was cradled in Judaism, and threatened at first to lie cramped within its cradle. When, by the genius of St. Paul, it was saved from that early danger, it stepped out into a world which politically was Roman and intellectually was Greek. For the first three eventful centuries the Roman influence steadily prevailed over the primitive Gospel, and finally produced Catholicism, the counterpart of the Roman Empire, in which the Pope replaced the Emperor, and the legalism of Rome replaced the freedom of the truth as it was in Jesus. During those same centuries the thought of the time, which was mainly Greek, was assimilating, recasting, and stereotyping the original Christian ideas. The jargon of the schools was heard in the Church. Con-

cepts which to the thinkers of the fourth century were real, and promised to be eternal, were applied to the Christian verities, which actually were real, and were actually to be eternal. And as Christianity began to appear in the theology of the fourth century, and as it was formulated in the symbols of the Councils, it was already a thing very remote from the New Testament. It had become a philosophical system expressed in terms which were unhappily destined before long to lose all their vital meaning.

The Greek metaphysic was as valid as the Roman polity. But it was not more so. When, after a thousand years of deepening gloom, the religion, swathed, cramped, stifled in its Greek thought and in its Roman statecraft, was in danger of death, and on the point of perishing, the Reformer first tried to rescue it from the polity which was obviously strangling it, and was glaringly at variance with all the original documents of the faith. He did not for the moment pay

any attention to the metaphysic, which was equally separable from the truth if not equally injurious to it. Perhaps the Renaissance, which was essentially a revival of ancient thought and feeling, did not feel the unsuitability of Greek forms. At any rate, it was necessary for the great movement of criticism and science to advance much further than the first Reformers dreamed of, before the challenge which Luther had delivered to the Roman polity could be delivered by other reformers to the Greek metaphysic.

M. Sabatier has shown with eloquence and lucidity how that challenge has in our time been delivered. He has also shown, and this is even more important, how the challenge to the intellectual forms or dogmas leaves unaffected the religious realities which were invested in these forms. It is, after all, the mere ignorance or timidity of a deficient culture which imagines that the faith is in danger because it has become necessary to reconsider the scientific or the intellectual

forms in which it can be delivered to our time. No one has more clearly realised or more tenderly sought to neutralise the shock which comes when change is in the air. The symbol and the epitome of our comfort is exemplified in the legend of Serapion.

“One day the monk Serapion, a man of burning zeal and deep piety, learnt from the priest Paphnutius and from the deacon Photinus that God, in whose image man had been created, was a spiritual Being, without body, without external form, without sensible organs. The pious Serapion declared himself convinced by the predominance of the Catholic tradition and by the arguments which had been placed before him, and all who were present rose to give thanks to God for having snatched so holy a man from the dismal heresy of the Anthropomorphites. But lo! in the midst of the prayer, the poor old man, feeling the image of the God to whom he had been accustomed to offer his prayer melting away in his heart, was seized with a deep trouble,

And breaking into sobs he threw himself on the ground and cried out with tears, 'Alas, woe is me! They have taken from me my God; I have now no one whom I can hold and worship and entreat.'"

The Christian verity comes to us in certain forms which are literally idols, though they are only mental idols. When these forms are discredited and rejected, it affects us as the ill-usage of their images affects Catholics. To the pious Neapolitan the black Madonna della Pignasecca *is* the Blessed Virgin. To many a simple Protestant a certain highly artificial dogma of Vicarious Punishment *is* the Atonement. It is a difficult task to carry the ignorant Catholic past the image of the saint or the crucifix to the living Christ. It is a difficult task, though not so difficult, to carry an unthinking Protestant past these metaphysical formulæ of the faith to those living and moving realities which were once expressed, but now are travestied, by the intellectual forms of a long-past age.

Not so difficult, because the Protestant least by his creed admits the appeal to reason, and at least by his habits is able to revert directly to Scripture.

Many earnest minds are working to-day to effect a metaphysical statement of the Christian truths which will harmonise with the universe as Science has revealed it to us, and with the philosophical forms in which the thinker of to-day can express himself. It is a pious undertaking. Mr. Griffith Jones's book, *Ascent through Christ*, has boldly attempted to bring into one plane the facts of evolutionary science and the faith of the Gospel. Principal Simon, in his most valuable book, *Reconciliation through Incarnation*, has placed the Atonement in its place as the complement of a rational cosmology. And all the gallant proofs that the Old Faith can live with the New are gradually accustoming our generation to change the form while clinging to the substance. The circle of enlightened minds slowly but certainly widens.

But it is well to remember that our meta-

Physic is no more final than the metaphysic of the Alexandrines. If we hand it down to our children it must be with sealed instructions that they be ready at once to discard it, and to turn afresh to the eternal facts, as the thoughts of men widen with the process of the suns, and as new knowledge, for which our ignorance made no allowance, demands admission into the theological conceptions.

Our little systems have their day ;

They have their day and cease to be.

No truth is more vital ; no discovery is more astounding. It is because Catholicism cannot understand this ; because it has canonised the decisions of ancient Councils, and elected to stand or fall with positions which are incredible to every instructed and revolting to every reverent mind ; because, in a word, it has included its transitory metaphysic in the positive which is eternal and authoritative, that it stands, a grotesque if picturesque survival, before the educated world.

Protestantism, wisely handled, saves religion ;



it enables men to think and to believe at the same time. It vindicates reason ; but in doing so it vindicates truth. It saves men, but it also saves the idea of God, by justifying the ways of God to men.

THE END

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